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THE MORGAN EXPLORES THE CAPTIVATING BOOK DESIGNS OF MODERN MASTER HENRI MATISSE

Graphic Passion: Matisse and the Book Arts

October 30, 2015 through January 18, 2016

Press Preview: Thursday, October 29, 10-11:30 AM
RSVP: media@themorgan.org

New York, NY, October 16, 2015 — World renowned for his paintings, sculptures, and drawings, Henri Matisse (1869–1954) also embraced the printed book as a means of artistic expression. Between 1912 and his death in 1954, he was engaged in nearly fifty book illustration projects, many produced with his direct involvement in page layout, typography, lettering, ornament, and cover design. He planned these publications with his characteristic vigilance and zeal, seeking a perfect fusion of image and text. His versatility, ingenuity, and highly refined literary sensibilities ensured the success of *Jazz* and other classics of twentieth-century illustration.

Graphic Passion: Matisse and the Book Arts, on view at the Morgan Library & Museum from October 30 to January 18, 2016, brings together thirty of these modern masterpieces and explores Matisse's creative process. Based on a collection donated by Frances and Michael Baylson in 2010, the exhibition underscores the Morgan's longstanding tradition of highlighting the best in printed books, their literary value, and artistic importance. The Museum's holdings in this area, beginning with three copies of the Gutenberg Bible, range from the invention of printing up to modern first editions.



Henri Matisse (1869–1954), *Icarus*, pochoir, plate VII, *Jazz* (1947). Courtesy of Frances and Michael Baylson © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015.

“Henri Matisse’s art is some of the best known—and most loved—of the modern era,” said Colin B. Bailey, director of the Morgan. “This exhibition focuses on a somewhat less familiar aspect of his work, but one that inspired a passionate and enduring commitment during the latter part of the artist’s career. The extraordinary volumes on view show Matisse delighting in the smaller scale of book design and are a testament to the fact that his talent transcended any medium.”

THE EXHIBITION

I. Early Work (1912–1932)

This exhibition begins and ends with illustrations Matisse made for his lifelong friend André Rouveyre. The frontispiece portrait in the monograph *André Rouveyre* (1912) could be considered his first attempt at illustration in book form (not counting exhibition catalogues). An artist and author famed for his caricatures of celebrities, Rouveyre appreciated the way he looked in this portrait, dapper and sardonic, a man about town gifted with a bold and wicked wit. He retained the original charcoal drawing as well as the printing plate, which he used in other publications about his work.



Left: Henri Matisse (1869–1954), frontispiece illustration in Louis Thomas (1885–1962), *André Rouveyre*. Paris: Les Bibliophiles Fantaisistes, Dorbon-Ainé, 1912. Frances and Michael Baylson Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum. © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. Right: Henri Matisse (1869–1954), illustration in Pierre Reverdy (1889–1960), *Les jockeys camouflés: trois poèmes par Monsieur Pierre Reverdy, agrémentés de cinq dessins inédits de Monsieur Henri Matisse*. Paris: Se trouve à la Belle Édition, 1918. Frances and Michael Baylson Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum. © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015.

Les jockeys camouflés (The Camouflaged Jockeys, 1918) is another example where Matisse provided illustrations to oblige a friend, the poet Pierre Reverdy, who hired the “master printer” and sought to remedy its faults by publishing another one closer to his original intentions. He reprinted Matisse’s illustrations in an enlarged and corrected version of *Les jockeys camouflés*, which is also displayed in the exhibition. “In this state of things,” he told Matisse, “I had no other choice but to publish the book myself.”

These and other early projects show how the artist developed a taste for typography and how he cultivated friendships with authors, who later encouraged him to take on more ambitious publication ventures.

II. First Artist’s Book

Stéphane Mallarmé’s *Poésies* (1932) was Matisse’s first independent work of art based on a literary text—a major effort with a scheme of illustrations and a typographic layout conceived as a fully integrated visual experience. The publisher gave him complete control over the planning process and bore all the expenses of making a luxury limited edition. Matisse started by sketching out two-page openings in a mock-up of the book, which he used to decide how to organize the texts and where to place the illustrations. Likewise, his later books sometimes inspired a series of mock-ups (*maquettes*), each representing a further refinement of his design ideas.

The Swan can be considered the signature image of Mallarmé’s *Poésies*. It was one of Matisse’s favorite etchings, the result of several preliminary studies including a graphite drawing in this exhibition. He wanted to express the beauty, power, and pride of the swan, symbolic traits evoked in Mallarmé’s famous sonnet about creative struggle and poetic aspirations. At first he portrayed it in a combative pose but then opted for a less aggressive creature with a neck curved in a typical Matissean arabesque, the dominant stylistic motif in his illustrations at that time.



Left: Henri Matisse (1869–1954), preliminary designs for Stéphane Mallarmé, *Poésies* (1932). Collection of The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. Right: Henri Matisse (1869–1954), linocut illustration and initial in Henry de Montherlant (1895–1972), *Pasiphaé, Chant de Minos (Les Crétois)*. Paris: Martin Fabiani, 1944. Frances and Michael Baylson Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum. © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015.

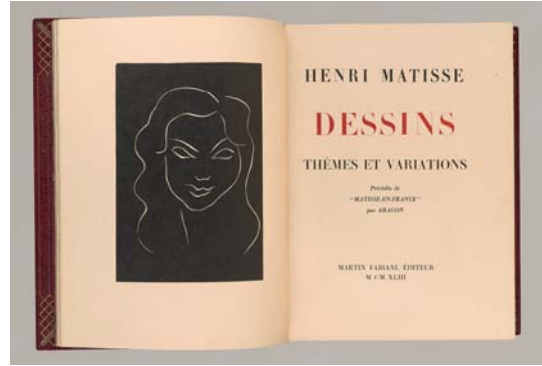
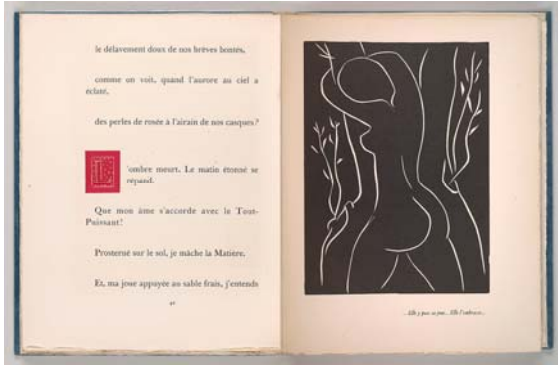
A boating trip in the Bois de Boulogne gave Matisse the original idea of the angry swan (who seems to have been provoked by the artist's intrusive scrutiny). In many ways the Mallarmé illustrations spoke as much to his personal interests and artistic preoccupations as to the poetry on the facing page. Several poems brought back memories of a recent trip to Tahiti; others inspired allusions to the wall painting he had just completed for the American collector Albert Barnes. This autobiographical content was perfectly in accord with his belief that an artist should not follow a text but rather accompany it "on a parallel track."

The Mallarmé was an expensive proposition. Then at the beginning of his career, the publisher Albert Skira promised to pay Matisse 500,000 francs for the etchings and 40,000 francs for additional artwork. Printed in a limited edition of 145 copies, it commanded a retail price of 16,000 francs or \$700, a formidable sum during the Depression. It sold slowly at first despite the critical acclaim it received, but sixteen years later copies were fetching prices of 60,000 francs, three times its original value adjusted for inflation.

III. The Function of Illustration

A versatile and inventive printmaker, Matisse could choose a method best suited for whatever text he had at hand. For Henry de Montherlant's poetic drama *Pasiphaé* (1932) he decided to employ white line on black background linocuts instead of the black line on white background etchings he used in Mallarmé's *Poésies*. This graphic turnaround disconcerted Montherlant at first, but the author then endorsed the new approach and declared it to be perfectly in accord with "my Faustian conception of that piece." He realized that linocuts could tell the dark side of the Pasiphaë story, her strange infatuation for the white bull sent by Poseidon, a monstrous act of forbidden love committed in a principled defiance of conventional morality.

Book projects became increasingly important to Matisse during the war. Suffering from ill health, and feeling isolated in southern France, he sought to display his recent work and keep in touch with the outside world with publications like *Dessins: Thèmes et variations* (1943) which contains nearly 160 collotype reproductions of drawings along with an explanatory text by the poet Louis Aragon. The publisher issued nearly a thousand copies so that students could learn about the "clear and definitive progress" the artist had made in his drawing techniques. The exhibition includes one of ten special copies printed on Japon Impérial.



Left: Henri Matisse (1869–1954), linocut illustration and initial in Henry de Montherlant (1895–1972), *Pasiphaé, Chant de Minos (Les Crétois)*. Paris: Martin Fabiani, 1944. Frances and Michael Baylson Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum. © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. Right: Henri Matisse (1869–1954), *Dessins: Thèmes et variations ... précédés de "Matisse-en-France" par Aragon*. Paris: Martin Fabiani, 1943. Frances and Michael Baylson Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum. © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015.

Aragon coined the metaphor “a cinema of sensations” to describe the succession of images in *Dessins: Thèmes et variations*. He had seen the original suites of drawings hung up on the wall in Matisse’s rooms in Nice. Scanning them in order, he could sense movement from one variation to the next, an optical illusion that helped to reinforce the thematic unity of a sequence. Matisse liked the cinematic metaphor, which the exhibition brings up to date with a touch screen device where the viewer can swipe through suites of drawings.

IV. Creative Differences

Matisse enjoyed the companionship of the authors, printers, and publishers who worked with him, but they too had strong opinions about illustration and graphic design. Creative differences were inevitable in these collaborative projects, some of which were fraught with tension.

Almost everything went wrong in the production of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1935)—although the idea behind it was brilliant. Formerly banned in the United States, this sensational and intimidating novel would be illustrated by an equally controversial modernist master in consultation with the author. Matisse and Joyce agreed on a pictorial scheme based on the Homeric subtext of the book, but the publisher insisted on a more conventional concept that might help readers to follow the plot and cope with Joyce’s prose. He even went so far as to hire another artist but then decided that he could not afford to replace Matisse.

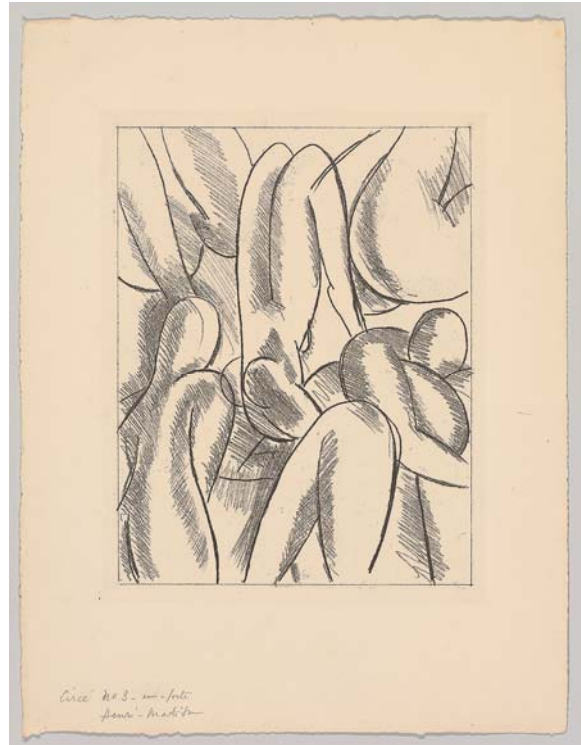
At first Matisse intended to illustrate *Ulysses* with lithographs, trying to achieve a richer effect than in the line etchings he made for the Mallarmé. A first round of proofs turned out badly, a setback

he blamed on the “idiot lithographer,” the proprietor of a printmaking studio who allowed him to work on materials that yield unpredictable results. He then opted for another technique, soft-ground etching, which allowed him to retain the desired amount of density and tone. Withholding payment, the publisher complained that the illustrations were unintelligible and that the change of plans had been made without his knowledge and in violation of the contract.

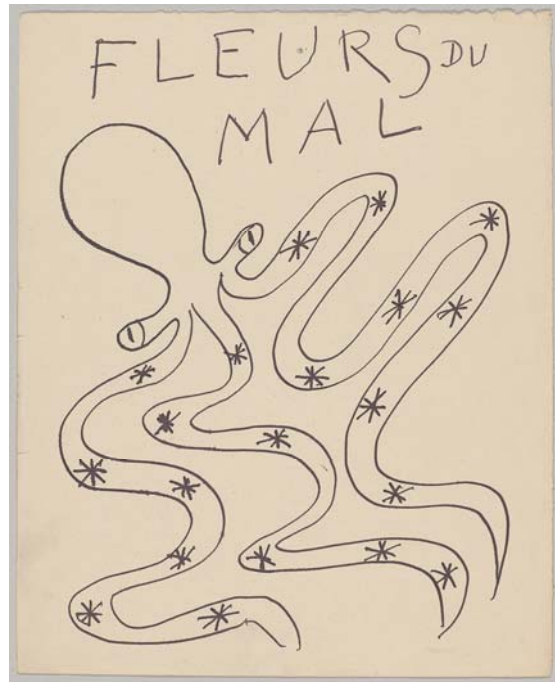
Joycean ingredients can be detected in Matisse’s designs even though he avoided “anecdotal allusions.” He knew that the Circe chapter took place in a Dublin brothel, *scène de maison publique*. An evening out on the town supplied an idea suitable for that setting. While he was in Paris, he attended a music hall performance at the Concert Mayol, which had just begun to present nude show-girl spectacles on the model of the Folies Bergère. One act featured a woman acrobat who descended a staircase on her hands, an image clearly rendered in his preliminary artwork and still perceptible as the central figure in the Circe composition.

V. Classics

Not just Joyce, but also leading figures of the French avant-garde inspired the book work of Matisse—poets such as Pierre Reverdy, Tristan Tzara, and René Char. In addition to these coterie publications, he expressed his admiration for the acknowledged classics of French literature: the works of Ronsard, Charles d’Orléans, and Baudelaire as well as *The Letters of a Portuguese Nun*.



Henri Matisse (1869–1954), preliminary study for the etching in the Circe chapter, *Ulysses* (1934). Collection of The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015.



Henri Matisse (1869–1954), rejected cover design for *Les fleurs du mal* (1946). Collection of The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015.

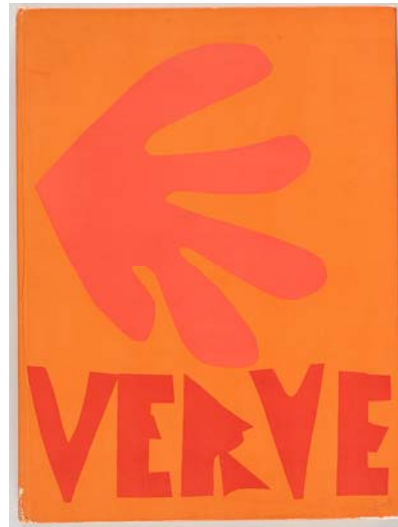
A long deferred edition of Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* challenged the ingenuity and stamina of the artist during the Second World War. The project was delayed because of other commitments, health problems, the disruptions of the war, and an accident in a print studio that ruined his lithograph illustrations. The exhibition includes a failed attempt to recreate the lithographs, printed in an edition of five copies. He then decided to produce a commercial edition printed in a thousand copies but changed his mind again, unable to resist the enticements of luxurious typography. An abridged Baudelaire finally appeared in 1947 in a limited edition, signed by the artist, with a frontispiece etching, pen-drawn ornaments, and a set of calligraphic initials printed by hand.

The cover design was the last item on Matisse's artistic agenda for *Les fleurs du mal*. He churned through a torrent of ideas for the signature image, some more Baudelairean than others. He drew a portrait of a smiling female figure with an alluring coiffure composed of Baudelaire's name spelled out in curls and ringlets. Noting the sinister associations in those poems, he sketched out flowers redolent of evil and several variations of a malignant octopus brandishing decorative tentacles. By process of elimination he ended up with a simple semi-abstract design with the title in the same script as the initials.

VI. Jazz and Verve

Matisse's book work reached a crescendo of color in his last years when he began to experiment with gouache cutouts, or, as he called it, "drawing with scissors." The illustrations in *Jazz* and the covers of *Verve* epitomize his innovative achievements in this medium, although here too he had to contend with technical problems, artistic challenges, and commercial constraints. For years his publisher Tériade had been urging him to produce a treatise on color. He resisted that idea but eventually capitulated after deciding that he could do something with cutout designs he had made as preliminary studies for a stage curtain. Tériade convinced him to proceed on that basis, little knowing that the book would turn out quite differently than either of them expected.

After completing the cutouts, Matisse had to find ways of reproducing them with the absolute accuracy he wanted in *Jazz*. He eventually opted for the pochoir stenciling technique, which could employ the same gouache pigments used in the originals. Tériade persuaded him to change the title and format of the book while it was in production. At first the artist wanted to call it *Cirque* but then agreed to the title *Jazz*, which was more in keeping with the free-form aphoristic text, seemingly improvised for the occasion. Matisse wanted the text to serve as a framing device to



Left: Henri Matisse (1869–1954), *Circus*, pochoir, plate II in *Jazz* (1947). Courtesy of Frances and Michael Baylson © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015. Right: Henri Matisse (1869–1954), *Dernières oeuvres de Matisse 1950–1954*. Paris: Éditions de la Revue Verve, 1958. Frances and Michael Baylson Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum. © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2015.

preserve the independence of the plates but allowed Tériade to sell some copies as books and some as print portfolios without the text. Both versions are in this exhibition. This plate was originally intended to be folded the other way around as the wrappers of the publication while Matisse still had the title *Cirque* in mind.

Matisse was pleased by the sensational success of *Jazz*, but in private correspondence he conceded that the pochoir stencils did not adequately reproduce the “purity” of his scissor work. After due consideration, however, he concluded that *Jazz* achieved its “principal purpose” by displaying accurate specimens of his work in color. Even second-generation stencil reproductions would be acceptable if they could demonstrate his theories by example.

Gouache cutouts proved to be especially suitable for producing the brilliantly colored covers of Tériade’s art journal *Verve*. Matisse finished his last cover for *Verve* a few months before he died, relying on just a few cutouts to present the title and an ornament in red and orange tints on an orange background — a design daring in its simplicity, said Tériade, who was delighted by the concept, “hot on hot, light on light. I am truly overwhelmed by it and pleased to have such a lovely thing to put on show.” Published in 1958, the orange *Verve* became a posthumous tribute to Matisse with articles on his work and lithograph reproductions of some of his gouache cutouts executed in the 1950s.

THE FRANCES AND MICHAEL BAYLSON COLLECTION

Frances and Michael Baylson have donated to the Morgan an unprecedented collection of Matisse illustrated books. The collection includes all the important books that he designed and illustrated himself, plus a large number of books and periodicals for which he designed the covers, and/or contributed original graphics, usually etchings or lithographs. Several of the books in the collection were published in very limited editions of five to fifteen copies, and are seldom available for public viewing. In addition, the gift includes hundreds of monographs, exhibition catalogues and related ephemera, which the Morgan can now make available for scholars.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

The accompanying exhibition catalogue includes about 170 color illustrations and recounts the publication history of nearly fifty books, including masterworks such as *Jazz*, Mallarmé's *Poésies*, and *Lettres portugaises*. Co-published by the Morgan Library & Museum and Pennsylvania State University Press, it is the first comprehensive in-depth analysis of Matisse's book design ventures and the first systematic survey of the topic in English. The text is by the organizer of the exhibition, John Bidwell, Astor Curator and Department Head of Printed Books and Bindings, with additional essays by Michael M. Baylson, Frances Batzer Baylson, Sheelagh Bevan, and Jay McKean Fisher.

Public Programs

ADULT PROGRAM

Sketching in the Gallery

Draw on your inspiration through sketching from works in the exhibition *Graphic Passion: Matisse and the Book Arts* with assistance from Susan Stillman, artist and Parsons The New School for Design faculty.

Saturdays, October 31 and November 21, Drop-in 11 am–1 pm

Tickets: Free with museum admission

Please note: Stools, boards, and a selection of pencils and drawing paper will be provided. While personal sketchbooks are allowed, ink, paint, markers, charcoal, chalk, pastels, folding stools and easels are not permitted in the galleries. Materials available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

LECTURE

Matisse and the Book Arts: Origins of an Exhibition

Frances and Michael Baylson, John Bidwell, and Jay Fisher

Through the generosity of Frances and Michael Baylson, the Morgan has acquired a nearly complete run of the books designed and illustrated by Matisse. This colloquium explores facets of his bookmaking career taking some of his most famous publications as examples. Frances and Michael Baylson describe how they formed their Matisse collection; John Bidwell, Astor Curator of Printed Books and Bindings at the Morgan, shows how the artist developed a taste for typography and calligraphic lettering; and Jay Fisher examines the illustrations in Mallarmé's *Poésies* on the basis of proofs and preliminary studies at the Baltimore Museum

of Art, where he is Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs. This program is made possible by the Franklin Jasper Walls Lecture Fund.

Tuesday, November 3, 6:30 pm*

Tickets: \$15; \$10 for Members; free for students with valid ID

*The exhibition *Graphic Passion Matisse and the Book Arts* at the Morgan will open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.

GALLERY TALK

Graphic Passion Matisse and the Book Arts

John Bidwell, Astor Curator of Printed Books and Bindings

Friday, November 6, 6:30 pm

Tickets: All gallery talks are free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations necessary.

CONCERT

Classical/Jazz: Musical Reflections on Henri Matisse

Simon Mulligan, piano

The intersection of art and music in Henri Matisse's work provides the context for a program of bold classical, jazz, and jazz-influenced works performed by the gifted pianist and composer Simon Mulligan. Featuring works by Chopin, Debussy, Stravinsky, Alexis Weissenberg, Fats Waller, Bill Evans, and Simon Mulligan.

Friday, November 13, 7:30 pm*

Tickets: \$35; \$25 for Members

*The exhibition *Graphic Passion: Matisse and the Book Arts* will open at 6:30 pm for concert attendees.

FAMILY PROGRAM

Your Book, Bold and Bright: Stencils and Cut-Outs

Stencils and cut-outs are easy to make, fast to use, and they tell stories in bright colors and bold shapes. French artist Henri Matisse used them to produce murals and book illustrations. Join Morgan educator Lisa Libicki on a short tour of *Graphic Passion: Matisse and the Book Arts*, and then grab scissors, paper, glue, and brushes to make your own book illustrations with stencils and cut-outs.

Saturday, November 14, 2-4 pm

Tickets: \$8 Adults; \$6 for Members; \$2 for Children

Appropriate for children age 6 and up.

Organization and Sponsorship

This exhibition is made possible by the generous support of the Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, The Grand Marnier Foundation, the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, and the Charles E. Pierce, Jr. Fund for Exhibitions, the IFPDA Foundation, and by the gift in 2010 of the collection of Frances and Michael Baylson, a major resource for the study of Henri Matisse. The catalogue is underwritten by the Franklin Jasper Walls Lecture Fund.

The organizing curator at the Morgan Library & Museum is John Bidwell, Astor Curator and Department Head of Printed Books and Bindings.



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

The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), one of the preeminent art collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today, more than a century after its founding in 1906, the Morgan serves as a museum, independent research library, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. In October 2010, the Morgan completed the first-ever restoration of its original McKim building, Pierpont Morgan’s private library, and the core of the institution. In tandem with the 2006 expansion project by architect Renzo Piano, the Morgan now provides visitors unprecedented access to its world-renowned collections of drawings, literary and historical manuscripts, musical scores, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, printed books, photography, and ancient Near Eastern seals and tablets.

General Information

The Morgan Library & Museum
225 Madison Avenue, at 36th Street, New York, NY 10016-3405
212.685.0008
www.themorgan.org

Just a short walk from Grand Central and Penn Station

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. The Morgan is open on Holiday Mondays, including Presidents’ Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, and the Monday after Christmas.

Admission

\$18 for adults; \$12 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, Café, or Dining Room.