

THE EXTRAORDINARY COLLECTION OF THE MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Coordinator: Sara Lishinsky

The Morgan Library and Museum is known for the quality and breadth of its collections. Its wide range of works include one of the world's foremost collections of literary and historical manuscripts, Medieval and Renaissance illuminated manuscripts, rare books, music, photography, master drawings, paintings, art objects, ancient and medieval jewelry, and ancient Near Eastern artifacts.

This study group will look at many objects in the museum's collections as presented in a series of past exhibitions. Each week's session will look at works from a different curatorial department: Paintings, Master Drawings, Antique Artifacts, Literature, Illuminated Manuscripts and Music. Not only will we have the opportunity to observe, appreciate and comment on various works, but we will also consider the materials and methods used and study the historical context from which such works emerged. Lastly, through close looking, we will attempt to analyze what makes a work of art, great art.

Sara is a former teacher. Since 2010 she has been a docent at the Morgan. She is a first-time coordinator.

Type of Study Group: Presentation with analysis and discussion

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Email and links to all readings and videos will be provided by the coordinator.

******* SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS *******

WEEK 1

TOPIC: JP Morgan in Portraiture—

Portraits of JP Morgan; the work of certain portrait artists; elements of successful portraiture; Morgan himself.

READING/VIEWING:

"Introduction" from *In August Company* by John Plummer, 1993, pp. 13-28;

YouTube: "JP Morgan: Emperor of Wall Street"

QUESTIONS:

As a businessman, what made Morgan so successful? Was the power he wielded dangerous for the country or beneficial? What led to the construction of the Morgan Library?

WEEK 2

TOPIC: "Drawn to greatness: Master Drawings from the Thaw Collection"—

Key moments in the history of draftsmanship by great artists from the Renaissance to the Modern era;

Review of the different drawing surfaces as well as the drawing tools used in different historical periods.

READING/VIEWING:

Press preview of the exhibition;

Description of the exhibition and the historical evolution of drawing;

Video on the Morgan website associated with this exhibition.

QUESTIONS:

What did Eugene Thaw base his choice of acquisitions on? What historical events precipitated new forms of art? What forms of art are categorized as "drawings"?

WEEK 3

TOPIC: "Medieval Monsters: Terrors, Aliens, Wonders"— We will look at the complex role that monsters played in the Middle Ages as seen in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts;

Terrors: how monsters enhanced the aura of those in power;

Aliens: marginalized groups in European societies;

Wonders: strange anomalies that populated the medieval world.

READING:

Excerpts from Chapter One, "From Scrolls to Illuminated Codex" in *Illuminated Manuscripts: The Book before Gutenberg* by Giulia Bologna, 1988;

Introduction to Chapter 3, "Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts" in

Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts by Alixe Bovey, 2002, pp. 69-71.

QUESTIONS:

What function did monsters play in the Middle Ages? Where did monsters supposedly reside according to medieval belief? What would be the contemporary counterpart of monstrosity in today's society?

WEEK 4

TOPIC: "I'm Nobody! Who Are You? The Life and Poetry of Emily Dickenson"—

Poems of Emily Dickenson, one of the most popular and enigmatic writers of the 19th century. She wrote almost 1,800 poems; Her chronological timeline.

WEEK 5

TOPIC: Gems of Nomadland: Jewellery and Metalwork from Greco-Roman Antiquity (2nd century BC- 3rd century AD)—

Magnificent pieces of jewelry from the Morgan collection of Ancient and Early Medieval Personal Ornaments;

Personal ornaments, worn in life and death to display the owner's wealth, status and cultural identity.

WEEK 6

TOPIC: "Woody Guthrie: People are the Song"—

Woody Guthrie (1912-1967), his hand-written lyrics, photographs, art and audio tapes; his life and career through his response to the themes of place, politics, family, love and spirituality.

READING/VIEWING:

Chapter 1, "My Life" in *Pastures of Plenty: A Self-Portrait* by Dave Marsh and Harold Leventhal, 1992;

Video on Morgan website;

Video on YouTube by Arlo Guthrie.

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