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Charles Antoine Coypel (French, 1694–1752). *François de Jullienne and His Wife*, 1743. Pastel, 39⅜ x 31½ in. (100 x 80 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs. Charles Wrightsman Gift, in honor of Annette de la Renta, 2011 (2011.84)

for Katharine Baetjer

WHO DEVOTED HERSELF TO THIS PUBLICATION

AND MADE COUNTLESS CONTRIBUTIONS

TO ITS SUCCESS

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Back cover illustration: Detail of El Greco, *A View of Toledo*, ca. 1599–1600. See fig. 1, p. 12.

Illustration on p. 2: Detail of *Mercury Changes Aglauros to Stone* from the *Story of Mercury and Herse*. Design, Italian, ca. 1540. Tapestry, Netherlandish, ca. 1570. See fig. 1, p. 148.

Contents

MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES FOR THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM **JOURNAL**

The *Metropolitan Museum Journal* is issued annually by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Its purpose is to publish original research on works in the Museum's collection. Articles are contributed by members of the Museum staff and other art historians and specialists. Submissions should be emailed to: journalsubmissions@metmuseum.org.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
MMAB *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*
MMJ *Metropolitan Museum Journal*

Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.

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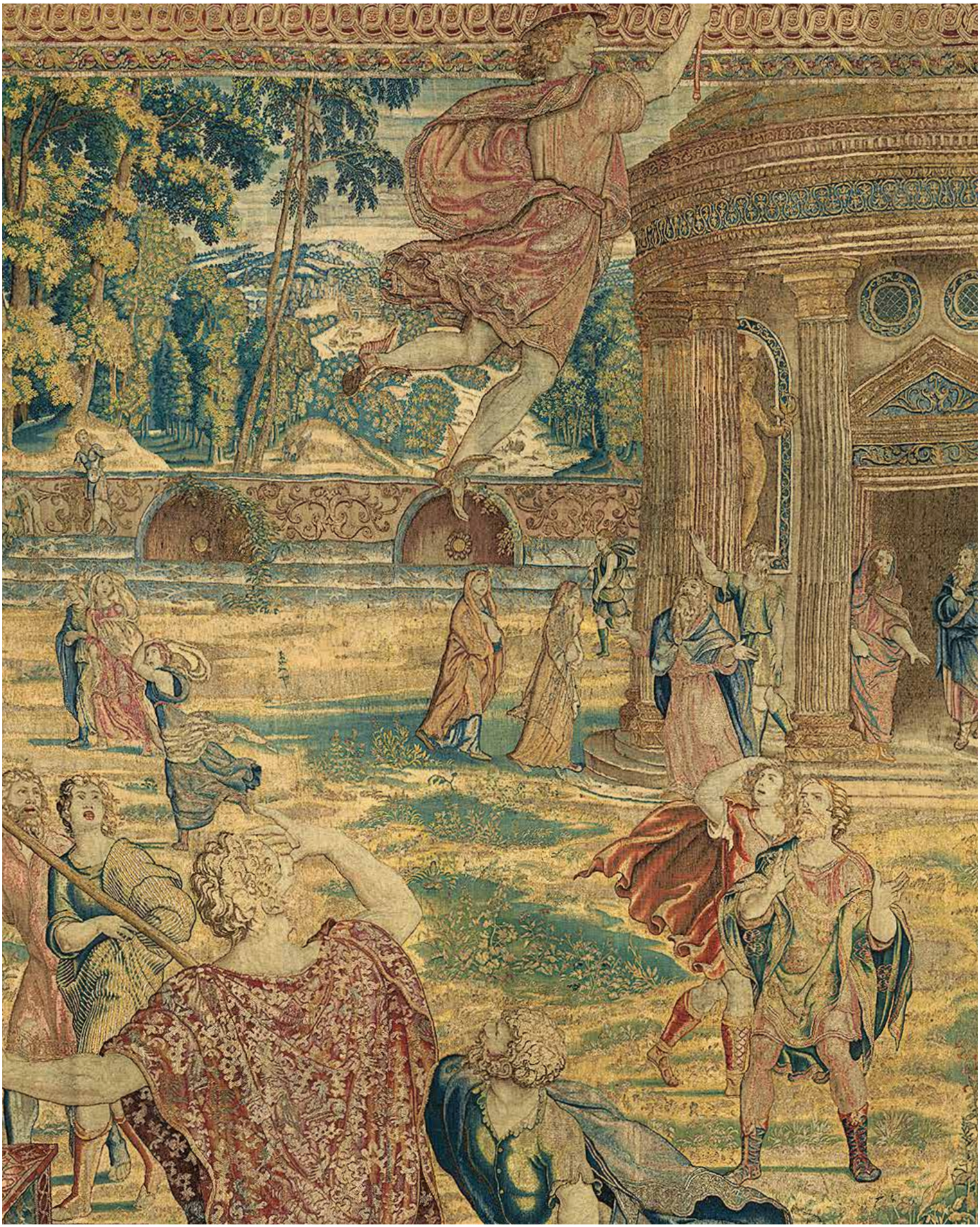

ELIZABETH CLELAND

Collecting Sixteenth-Century Tapestries in Twentieth-Century America: The Blumenthals and Jacques Seligmann

In the summer of 2010, a complete, eight-piece tapestry set, the *Story of Mercury and Herse*, probably designed by the Italian Giovanni Battista Lodi da Cremona, was reunited to magnificent effect in the temporary exhibition "*Los amores de Mercurio y Herse*: Una tapicería rica de Willem de Pannemaker" at the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.[1] Although six of the tapestries were already in Spain, documented there since 1603, the final two pieces, *Aglauros's Vision of the Bridal Chamber of Herse*[2] and *Mercury Changes Aglauros to Stone* (fig. 1), were lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, having been sold by their Spanish owners at the dawn of the twentieth century. The circumstances of these tapestries' more recent provenance draw attention to two of the Metropolitan Museum's most inspired donors. The unusual relationship between these collectors and the dealer from whom they acquired the tapestries,

and the survival of their correspondence, sheds some light on the often impenetrable world of art dealing in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

In beauty of design, quality of execution, condition, and the sumptuousness of their raw materials, *Aglauros's Vision of the Bridal Chamber of Herse* and *Mercury Changes Aglauros to Stone* are keystones of the Metropolitan Museum's tapestry collection.[3] It is, therefore, perhaps all the more surprising that these tapestries were not part of the primary edition of the *Story of Mercury and Herse*, only one piece of which survives in the Palazzo del Quirinale, Rome.[4] Instead they were woven some thirty years later, about 1570, under the direction of the great Brussels-based master weaver Willem de Pannemaker as part of a breathtakingly sumptuous reedition, the richness of which is remarkable even among characteristically splendid Renaissance tapestries. In this edition, the decorative elements of the designs have been noticeably embellished, the bright palette toned down to accentuate the glow of silver and gilded-silver metal-wrapped threads, and the weaving technique ramped up to include large areas of virtuoso effects, such as embroidery-like basket weave.

Though the cartoons were approaching three decades old when they were reused to weave this set, the outlay of cost to afford such materials and workmanship implies that de Pannemaker was almost certainly working on commission. The patron has not been documented, but by 1603 the set was already included in an inventory of the collection of Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, 5th marquis of Denia and 1st duke of Lerma (1553–1625), and his wife, Catalina de la Cerda, daughter of the 4th duke of Medinaceli.[5] After the tapestries had remained for centuries together, in 1903, at the death of the duchess of Denia and Tarifa (1827–1903), widow of the 15th duke of Medinaceli, they were split among six of her heirs. A note in the Medinaceli family archives, written in June 1909, recorded the allocations: the first piece, *Mercury Seeing Herse*, passed to the duchess of Híjar (1854–1923); the second, *Mercury Walking with Herse*, to the 2nd duke of Tarifa (1864–1931); the third, *Aglauros Stopping Mercury*, the fifth, *Aglauros Is Overcome by Envy*, and the sixth, *Dancing in Cecrops' Palace*, all to the 17th duke of Medinaceli (1880–1956); the fourth, *Cecrops Welcoming Mercury*, to the duchess of Uceda (1849–1923); the seventh, *Aglauros's Vision of the*

fig. 1 *Mercury Changes Aglauros to Stone* from the *Story of Mercury and Herse*. Design attributed to Giovanni Battista Lodi da Cremona (Italian, active 1540–ca. 1566), ca. 1540. Tapestry woven under the direction of Willem de Pannemaker (Netherlandish, active 1535–78, d. 1581), Brussels, ca. 1570. Wool, silk, and precious-metal-wrapped threads, 14 ft. 9 in. × 23 ft. 6 in. (449.6 × 716.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of George Blumenthal, 1941 (41.190.134)

fig. 2 *George Blumenthal as Financial Wizard*. Pen drawing preserved in the George and Florence Blumenthal Scrapbook, Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

fig. 3 Florence Blumenthal. Photographic print preserved in the George and Florence Blumenthal Scrapbook. Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Bridal Chamber of Herse, to the 14th duke of Lerma (1860–1936); and the eighth, *Mercury Changes Aglauros to Stone*, to the countess of Valdelagrana (1865–1949).[6]

By November 1909, the duke of Lerma and the countess of Valdelagrana had both sold their tapestries, which passed in rapid succession from a Parisian antiquarian, Raoul Heilbronner, to the dealer Jacques Seligmann, based in Paris and New York, to collectors George and Florence Blumenthal.[7] On November 17, 1909, the two tapestries arrived at the Metropolitan Museum, to which, apparently immediately after the tapestries' acquisition, the Blumenthals presented them on loan.[8] The loan was celebrated in the Museum's *Bulletin* in March 1910.[9]

George Blumenthal was a self-made millionaire.[10] Born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, in 1858, he worked as a banker and found his niche in the buying and selling of securities. By the time he was twenty-eight, Blumenthal had already been chosen by the legendary moneyman John Pierpont Morgan to work with him and Jacob H. Schiff on forming a syndicate to successfully halt the gold crisis that was on the brink of wiping out the American economy. J. P. Morgan impressed the younger bankers not solely as a business mentor but also with his voracious pursuit of fine art. Both Schiff and Blumenthal emulated Morgan's tapestry collecting, but while Schiff was content to commission inexpensive modern copies woven in New York, Blumenthal spent part of his fortune buying the real thing.[11] Employed by the firm of Lazard Frères, by his late thirties Blumenthal had become director of the New York branch, and his phenomenal success was already the stuff of caricature (fig. 2).

Although Blumenthal's work occupied him on both shores of the Atlantic, and his wife, Florence (fig. 3), had been born and raised in California, the Blumenthals lived much of their married life in France: it was in Paris that their hospital for sick children was built; that they gave to the Sorbonne, sponsored new inner-city parks, and funded prizes for struggling artists; and that Florence established their philanthropic Fondation Blumenthal. Indeed, in 1929, Florence was presented with France's Legion of Honor, her husband receiving his slightly later.[12]

Nonetheless, stateside, the couple needed a suitably impressive New York base. In 1920, the Blumenthals unveiled their brand-new New York town house, built on the corner of East Seventieth Street and Park Avenue. It is likely that the *Mercury and Herse* tapestries were acquired, eleven years earlier, with that specific location already in mind. The New York mansion, long in the planning, had been designed around the Blumenthals'

art collection, with each room taking as its focus a particular star possession. Seligmann's son, Germain Seligman (he dropped the second *n* from his name), would later report that "every capital work of art was to be chosen before the actual building began . . . so that it would fit ideally into the place planned for it both in physical proportion and in relation to the aesthetic scheme."[13] Not long after the Blumenthals acquired the tapestries from Seligmann, they also bought from him another Renaissance masterpiece, the early sixteenth-century marble patio from the castle of Los Vélez, in Vélez Blanco, Almería, Spain, which would ultimately provide the inimitable setting for the tapestries' display. Sourced, like the tapestries, from Spain, the patio came via Seligmann's agent Heilbronner.[14] Though the Blumenthals' house was demolished in 1945—an event deemed newsworthy enough for a headline in the *New York Times*—most of the art collection survives, and written accounts and archival photography provide a sense of the home's extraordinary atmosphere.[15]

The heart of the house was the patio (figs. 4, 5). Within it, the two *Mercury and Herse* tapestries faced each other across the space, the walls nearby adorned with Florentine terracotta armorial tondi, a painted and gilded stucco relief of the Virgin and Child also from Florence, Justus of Ghent's great cloth painting *The Adoration of the Magi* (which Blumenthal acquired from the younger Seligman), and, on opposite sides of the room's upstairs gallery, two massive fifteenth-century Spanish polyptychs: the *Virgin and Child with the Pietà and Saints* by an anonymous Castilian painter, and the Aragonese *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Scenes from the Life of the Virgin* attributed to the Master of the Morata Retable.[16] Lining the upstairs gallery were early sixteenth-century *Hunting Parks* tapestries.[17] In the windows were set sixteenth-century Flemish stained glass, and the room was lit by candles held in massive, mostly Spanish, sixteenth-century iron freestanding candelabra. The Florentine fountain in the center of the room bore the arms of Jacopo de' Pazzi; it had been rescued from the Pazzi Gardens, which were destroyed in 1865.

Next door to the patio was the Ballroom, decorated with eighteenth-century "flower-strewn" tapestries.[18] The Gothic Hall (also called the Library) on the floor above, featured the tapestry titled *Hawking Party*, acquired from the Charles Mège collection in Paris, conceivably again via Seligmann and/or Heilbronner, both of whom handled works from that collection, and *Shepherd and Shepherdesses*, formerly in the Schutz collection in Paris; covering the cushions scattered on the sofas, visible in period photography, was a set of six Brussels-attributed *Story of Abraham* miniature tapestries, dated to 1600 and sumptuously woven in wool, silk, and precious-metal-wrapped threads, bought by Mrs. Blumenthal from Seligmann.[19] The Formal Dining Room next door centered on the sizable tapestry fragment then called the "Charlemagne Tapestry," bought by the Blumenthals in 1912 from the dealers French & Co. and previously owned by the marquis Henri de Vibraye, from his château at Bazoches du Morvan in the Nièvre region of France, and the very fine altar tapestry of the Lamentation was positioned under a minstrels' gallery.[20] Finally, on the top floor of the house was George Blumenthal's study, in which could be found the splendid tapestry of the Crucifixion, purchased before 1909, also from French & Co.; its former owner, the baron Frédéric d'Erlanger, had acquired it—along with many other tapestries—at the sale of the collection of the duke of Berwick and Alba in 1877.[21]

After a day spent in the house as Florence Blumenthal's guest, the architect William Welles Bosworth wrote to his hostess that she had made "the greatest contribution to the art of domestic architecture in this country."[22] The Parisian dealer René Gimpel noted in his diary that "her house is the only one in New York whose atmosphere is genuinely antique."[23] Another visitor to the house, the connoisseur-dealer Georges Demotte, wrote to Florence that "for the first time in my life, I have visited an ideal home."[24]

In his memoirs, Germain Seligman evocatively recalled visiting the New York town house:

> Once inside, the impression of austerity was replaced by a world of the imagination, far from the material bustle of New York. It was a dream-like oasis of beauty, complete with melodious sound of running water from the patio fountain, often the only sound of greeting. At dusk, the light from a table lamp opposite the entrance gave to the high, wide court a quality at once eerie and intimate, as it reduced the proportions and picked up the warmth of the blooming flowers, green plants, and colorful oriental rugs. It is difficult to explain how so sumptuous and impressive a house could be so intimate; this was but one achievement of an extraordinary woman; he continued: Florence Blumenthal moved about like a fairy-tale princess. . . . In the evening, she often wore Renaissance velvet gowns, in dark jewel-like colors which . . . gave her an air of having been born to this superb environment where every work of art seemed tirelessly at home."[25]

fig. 4 View of the patio in the Blumenthals' New York home, with the *Aglauros's Vision of the Bridal Chamber of Herse* tapestry. Photographic print preserved in the "Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, fifty east Seventieth Street, New York, 192-?" album. Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

fig. 5 View of the patio in the Blumenthals' New York home, with *Mercury Changes Aglauros to Stone* tapestry. Photographic print preserved in the "Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, fifty east Seventieth Street, New York, 192-?" album. Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

fig. 6 Jacques Seligmann. Photographic print preserved in the Jacques Seligmann & Co., Inc., Records. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

In later years, after Florence's death, George Blumenthal stopped using any electric light in the Court, but instead lit it only by candles—and employed three "candlemen" who were kept solely occupied with the lighting and extinguishing of the hundreds of candles illuminating the cavernous room.[26]

Like so many of their contemporaries, the Blumenthals built up their holdings of European art by acquiring works sold off from the great European collections via a small group of dealers.[27] For a handful of their tapestries, they turned, for example, to French & Co., René Gimpel, and auctions. But the bulk of their tapestries, like much of their other medieval and Renaissance furniture, paintings, sculptures, and stained glass, they acquired from the Seligman(n)s. In addition to the tapestries recorded in their New York mansion, the Blumenthals' collection included two important *Grotesques* tapestries, then believed to have been part of a set of bed hangings for Philip II of Spain, acquired from Seligmann in 1912, and other fine examples of Brussels and Parisian production.[28]

In what was an exceedingly cynical and intensely competitive atmosphere, with the vast sums of money being spent occasioning dealers to nurture and groom clients, the case of the Seligman(n)s and the Blumenthals seems to have been rather exceptional.[29] George Blumenthal and Jacques Seligmann (fig. 6) shared a personal acquaintance that stretched all the way back to boyhood, when both apparently attended the same school in Frankfurt. Aware of the reflected cachet of this connection, the Seligman(n)s, ever canny businessmen, went to some length to present the association as more of a friendship and less of a business relationship, an idea perpetuated by Germain throughout his memoirs.[30] Nonetheless, the letters between the Blumenthals and the Seligman(n)s, preserved in the Jacques Seligmann & Co. Records, do reveal an informality between the correspondents—endorsing the notion that this was indeed more than a business acquaintance. Seligmann, writing to George Blumenthal in French, familiarly addressed him as "tu"; in his correspondence with Mrs. Blumenthal, she signed herself "Florie."[31]

Their letters ranged beyond art collecting. Blumenthal, for example, gave the younger Seligman advice about stocks and shares.[32] Motivated by their shared Jewish heritage, Jacques Seligmann noted to "George" a request from a "Mr. Warburg" to send him something for Jewish charities (which he did).[33] As proof of their friendship, the Blumenthals sent the Seligman(n)s food hampers on a regular basis.[34] A glimpse into the Blumenthals' domestic life is also offered by Florence's correspondence with Germain, written in a conspiratorial tone, regarding the acquisition of her husband's Christmas present in December 1928.[35] George Blumenthal's relationship with Seligmann was familiar enough for the dealer to ask Blumenthal to recommend him to John D. Rockefeller Jr.[36]

Blumenthal's support of Seligmann's endeavors led him to lend some of his most splendid tapestries to the ambitious loan exhibitions that Seligmann hosted in his Parisian showroom. In 1913, Blumenthal withdrew both of the *Mercury and Herse* tapestries from their loan at the Metropolitan Museum and had them shipped to France so that Seligmann could show them at his exhibition "Medieval and Renaissance Art," ostensibly organized by the marquise de Ganay to raise funds for the French Red Cross. In 1927, the Blumenthals lent the Crucifixion that Seligmann had previously admired hanging in what he called "George's den" in the New York mansion to the loan exhibition of religious art organized to benefit the Basilica of the Sacré Coeur and sponsored by Louis Cardinal Dubois, archbishop of Paris, and Patrick Cardinal Hayes, archbishop of New York.[37]

At face value, these exhibitions were noncommercial ventures: none of the tapestries or other works were for sale, and the events were, in name at least, curated by luminaries of the social scene, with proceeds going to charity. In actuality, they provided Seligmann, as

host, with a respectable veneer of philanthropy and served as a marvelous advertisement, reuniting many works that had passed through his hands, showcasing an impressive roster of influential clients and, as Germain later put it, "bringing the art-minded public, as well as the choice collectors, to [their premises in the former Hôtel de] Sagan."[38]

The Blumenthals' special relationship with Seligmann also provides the key to explaining the otherwise puzzling paucity of transactions between Blumenthal and the ubiquitous dealer Sir Joseph Duveen. Blumenthal never apparently acquired any tapestries from Duveen's stock and had little or no dealings with the Duveen firm in general. The correspondence between the Blumenthals and the Seligman(n)s is remarkably candid in their mutual abhorrence of Duveen, strengthening the idea that, long before they became subject to investigation by modern observers, the questionable tactics of the Duveen firm and, in particular, Duveen's business relationship with the art historian Bernard Berenson were already being remarked upon by their contemporaries.[39] Seligmann wrote to Blumenthal: "It is terrible to think that a country like America is undermined by such intelligent and nasty people as that lot [Duveen and associates], but it cannot be helped. That 'bande noire' wants to be in possession of all of America, and the means which are employed are really terrible. . . . Well, it is no use to talk about all those terrible, undermining businesses."[40]

When another collector questioned Jacques Seligmann's refusal to provide attributional guarantee, Seligmann took a veiled swipe at what he regarded as Duveen's questionable transactions with art "experts."[41] In 1921 Seligmann went so far as to suggest that he and Blumenthal were united against all that Duveen represented, and that Duveen's associate, Berenson, had occasioned an intrigue around a painting attributed to Titian owned by Blumenthal simply to "what we call in French, 'nous brouiller' [cause trouble between us]!"[42] Almost three years later, Germain wrote to Florence Blumenthal that "you would be surprised indeed to hear of the machinations already set afoot against me by the combination at the head of which the same people [Duveen and associates] remain."[43]

The particularly bitter antagonism between the Seligman(n)s and the Duveens probably originated with Henry Duveen's perceived double cross back in 1901 when he maneuvered Jacques Seligmann, his erstwhile partner in the scheme, out of the sale at vastly inflated cost of the *Mazarin Tapestry* to J. P. Morgan.[44] Nor can it have helped that Duveen continued to engage in business with Jacques's estranged brother, Arnold.[45] But in general terms, the atmosphere of suspicion and distrust among the principal dealers of tapestries operating about this time was part of a wider phenomenon: the small band of dealers frequently pitted one against another and kept a wary eye on one another's activities. When George Blumenthal, for example, later bought another tapestry, *Gentleman*, from the *Figures in a Rose Garden* group, at the sale of Raoul Heilbronner's holdings in Paris in June 1921, Joseph Duveen's agent cabled Duveen to remark upon the fact that Jacques Seligmann had accompanied Blumenthal to the sale.[46]

We get the impression of a pack of hounds on the scent of ancient European collections whose owners were amenable to selling. In the midst of negotiations with the Chapter of the Cathedral of Burgos, for instance, for two of its splendid *Story of the Redemption of Man* tapestries, Duveen's agents cabled him this warning: "We must act quickly as Germain Seligman is now in Spain, probably after this business also we must keep very alive as Wildenstein, Larcade, both Seligmanns are searching everywhere for Gothic tapestries and are paying higher prices than we are."[47] Indeed, in 1931, the Spanish agent Raimundo Ruiz would eventually sell the two tapestries from Burgos not to Duveen but to French & Co.[48]

Similarly, in 1913, during an uneasy business collaboration between French & Co. and Heilbronner, pertaining to the duke of Sesto's *Scipio* tapestries (subsequently sold to William Randolph Hearst), a mutual acquaintance urged Heilbronner to be candid with French & Co. about who had already seen the tapestries because "you know exactly what kind of people Duveen and Seligmann are, and if they can damage the goods by talking against them, they will certainly do so."[49] In 1915, at J. P. Morgan's death, Joseph Duveen made an offer to purchase his enormous and important tapestry collection from Morgan's son; Duveen later confided to his gallery manager that "he did not reply. Two days later I heard that Mitchell Samuels of French & Co., backed by [the collector] Joseph Widener, had bought the tapestries. I had lost the market for tapestries which had been created by my father forty years ago and which we had held ever since. I have to do something to get it back."[50]

Given this backdrop, it is perhaps not so surprising to find no explicit reference to sales transactions regarding the *Mercury and Herse* tapestries either in Raoul Heilbronner's papers, preserved in the Library of Congress, or in the Jacques Seligmann & Co. Records,

now in the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art. Not only are both of these sets of records incomplete, but more particularly, even if the transactions linked to the *Mercury and Herse* tapestries are preserved among them, the vocabulary used to describe the tapestries would have been kept deliberately vague, lest any competitors caught wind of the tapestries' short-lived availability to the art market.

The speed with which the tapestries passed from their two Spanish owners through the hands of Heilbronner and Seligmann to the Blumenthals, and the seamlessness of the immediate loan to the Metropolitan Museum lend credence to the suggestion that Seligmann had orchestrated a plan well in advance of the actual purchase. Seligmann had apparently been aware of the sumptuous *Mercury and Herse* set since it was first published in 1906; citations for this reference and for a 1907 article appear in the brief object record of the tapestries in the Jacques Seligmann & Co. Records.[51] Once the tapestries had been split between the Medinaceli heirs, Seligmann almost certainly approached them with an offer, already bearing in mind the tapestries' suitability for the Renaissance Hispano-Flemish theme of the planned centerpiece of the Blumenthals' American home.

Heilbronner, who elsewhere dealt in more pedestrian works, is unlikely to have been acting independently and instead seems to have been Seligmann's discreet intermediary, probably again needed to avoid arousing the curiosity of rival dealers. It was Seligmann who handled all the details of the loan to the Museum, acting in the Blumenthals' name. The tapestries were shipped from Europe to Jacques Seligmann & Co.'s New York branch, whence they were transferred to the Museum, where they remained until June 1914, with a brief absence from March to July 1913, when they traveled to Paris for inclusion in Seligmann's exhibition.[52]

Seligmann was apparently right to have been so cautious: French & Co. had photographs of all eight *Mercury and Herse* tapestries among its papers, and the well-informed author of the later note in the Metropolitan Museum's files addressed to John Goldsmith Phillips, then a curator in the Department of Western European Arts, recording Heilbronner, Seligmann, and Blumenthal's transactions for the two *Mercury and Herse* tapestries, was French & Co.'s cofounder and director, Mitchell Samuels.[53] Seligmann's efforts and achievement in obtaining two of the prized *Mercury and Herse* tapestries on behalf of his erstwhile school friend was probably motivated as much by awareness of the cachet the Blumenthals' New York residence would eventually confer as by their perceived friendship, but it is nonetheless striking that he sold the tapestries to Blumenthal for a very reasonable sum: reportedly $120,000 for both tapestries.[54] To put that in some context, $120,000 in 1909 was roughly equivalent to the price of ten acres of Bronx farmland in that year, and eight times the mayor of New York's annual salary.[55] Had Seligmann made the tapestries available to the market, it is probable that he could have sold them for considerably more than $60,000 each, considering the $80,000 Mrs. Blumenthal paid the dealer René Gimpel for the much smaller and less important *Saint Veronica* tapestry in 1919, or Arthur Lehman's acquisition of the more modest, if appealing, *Holy Family with Saint Anne* for $100,000 from French & Co. in 1916.[56] Inflated tapestry costs achieved by some dealers dwarf the Blumenthals' payment for the prized *Mercury and Herse* works: examples include Henry Duveen's sale of the *Mazarin Tapestry* to J. P. Morgan, mentioned above, for a reputed $500,000 in 1901 and the $350,000 Joseph Duveen persuaded Mrs. George Cooper to pay for a set of Beauvais tapestry-woven chair upholstery and wall panels in 1902.[57]

From 1926 to 1930, the Blumenthals published privately a series of six volumes cataloguing the various facets of their art collection.[58] The pattern behind much of their collecting was the furnishing of their homes: Rococo works in their Parisian home were complemented by medieval and Renaissance pieces for a newly built annex, called the Salle Gothique, partly composed of various salvaged architectural elements, also decorated with tapestries. Period photography of the Salle Gothique (fig. 7) provides glimpses of the *Gentleman* from the *Figures in a Rose Garden* acquired at Heilbronner's sale. European medieval and Renaissance objects dominated the New York mansion and Mrs. Blumenthal's other domestic project, their château in Grasse, near Cannes, France.

Although Jacques Seligmann celebrated George Blumenthal as "superior to the generality of (American) connoisseurs," adding, "there is no body (and this is not to flatter you) in all America of whom you can say, except the Rothschilds, that he possesses such a marvelous chosen collection as yours," sources indicate that it was Florence who was the driving force behind the couple's enthusiasm for art.[59] It was she, and not George, whom Gimpel noted as the purchaser of the *Saint Veronica* tapestry.[60] Works were needed to furnish the Blumenthal homes, but above and beyond decoration, Florence was clearly interested in condition and suitability: in their correspondence, Jacques Seligmann, for example, was careful to be honest with her about

fig. 7 View of the Salle Gothique in the Blumenthals' Parisian home. Photographic print preserved in the George and Florence Blumenthal Scrapbook, Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

restorations, candidly admitting that one set of "Gothic" tapestries in which she was interested had "modern borders"; she frequently alluded to objects' proportions and to their appropriateness for the settings she had in mind for them.[61]

Florence Blumenthal also displayed enthusiasm and pride in the sway her husband's status with the Metropolitan Museum gave her: according to an anecdote recounted by Alfred H. Barr Jr., later director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, when in 1910 Alfred Stieglitz declared that the Metropolitan Museum would never accept the three drawings by Matisse she intended to gift to the Museum, she apparently retorted, "The Museum will take what I offer it," and it did.[62] According to Germain Seligman, Florence sought to emulate the example of her older acquaintance, Bostonian Isabella Stewart Gardner, who had opened the museum housing her art collection in 1903, declaring, "years ago, I decided that the greatest need in our Country was Art. . . . We were a very young country and had very few opportunities of seeing beautiful things, works of art . . . so I determined to make it my life's work, if I could."[63] In turn, Florence herself would provide inspiration for philanthropic art collecting by a wealthy young heiress in Chicago, Kate Buckingham. Folders of letters from 1921 to 1924 in the Seligman(n)s' correspondence reveal the extent of Florence's role as an intermediary introducing Miss Buckingham to the dealers and reassuring her on acquisitions from them.[64] Among the works Buckingham would go on to acquire from the Seligman(n)s was the important tapestry *A Falconer with Two Ladies and a Foot-Soldier*, purchased as one of a group of objects intended to form a great Gothic Hall at the center of the new Art Institute of Chicago.[65]

Above all, it was Florence Blumenthal who, following the tragic death of their only child from illness at eleven years of age, articulated poignantly her motivation behind the couple's ultimately philanthropic collecting, declaring in 1919:

> I'm rich, pampered, elegant, and people think I'm happy. . . . How can I be! I've lost my son. . . . The child whom I created is dead; so I had to create something else, and I made this house, a personality of stone. We'll bequeath it, with the collection, to the city of New York, but its spirit will be gone, for these rugs caress the stones below; the familiars of all this furniture they adorn, will have to be put away, protected behind thick glass.[66]

The couple's philanthropic intentions were perhaps already evident in 1909, when George Blumenthal became the first Jewish trustee of the Metropolitan Museum; from 1928, he donated and handled a fund of $1 million for the Museum; in 1933, three years after Florence's death, he took on the role of the Museum's president.[67] Upon his death, in 1941, he bequeathed to the Museum his entire art collection (more than 630 objects), along with the New York mansion, with the understanding that the Museum could demolish the house to profit from the land sale.[68] After a twenty-year absence, during which time they hung in the Blumenthals' New York mansion, the *Mercury and Herse* tapestries returned to the Metropolitan Museum. When George Blumenthal's second wife, Ann, died two years later, in 1943, she left to the Museum the twenty-one works that had been allowed to stay with her.

The Blumenthals' magnificent collection, of such caliber that more than two hundred of the works are still on display in the Museum's galleries, spanned European paintings, applied arts, and furniture from the eleventh to the eighteenth century. But arguably, it was their tapestries, in particular the *Mercury and Herse* hangings, that most effectively embody Florence Blumenthal's sumptuous aesthetic and the fruits of the canny guidance of Jacques Seligmann.

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NOTES

1 See Herrero Carretero and Forti Grazzini 2010. This article is based on a paper delivered at the accompanying symposium, held at the Prado, titled "Los Tapices Flamencos en el Siglo XVI: La Serie de Mercurio y Herse," July 13–15, 2010. Giovanni Battista Lodi da Cremona is the focus of Iain Buchanan's accompanying article in this volume.

2 MMA 41.190.135; see fig. 1 in "Giovanni Battista Lodi da Cremona and the *Story of Mercury and Herse Tapestry Series*, by Iain Buchanan, in the present volume. For analysis of the tapestry's raw materials, see Caro et al. 2014, pp. 163, 164, tables 1 and 2.

3 MMA 41.190.135; 41.190.134; see Standen 1985, pp. 87–99, no. 10.

4 Rome, Palazzo del Quirinale, inv. O.D.P., no. 22; see Forti Grazzini 1994, vol. 1, pp. 170–82, no. 76.

5 "Cuaderno de diferentes tasaciones, unas simples y otras originales, de tapicerías, alfombras, colgaduras, camas, sitiales y otras cosas correspondientes al Exmo. Sr. Duque de Lerma, Año de 1603," El Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli, Hospital de San Juan Bautista, Toledo, Spain, Denia-Lerma microfilm, reel 69, frames 368–456; see Herrero Carretero 2010, p. 7.

6 Today, four of the tapestries remain in the private collections of the extended family; those inherited by the duchess of Uceda and the duke of Tarifa are now in the Prado, the former bequeathed in 1934 and the other purchased in 1965; see Herrero Carretero in Herrero Carretero and Forti Grazzini 2010, pp. 10, 26–29. For an alternate ordering of the seventh and eighth tapestries, see "Giovanni Battista Lodi da Cremona and the *Story of Mercury and Herse Tapestry Series*," by Iain Buchanan, in the present volume.

7 The sale of the tapestries from Heilbronner to Seligmann to the Blumenthals is described in a letter from Mitchell Samuels to John Goldsmith Phillips Jr., October 13, 1943, departmental files, MMA Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts. Although it is apparent that Samuels is referring to 41.190.134 and .135, he mistakenly identifies their subject as "Psyche," perhaps thinking of the lost, rich, Brussels-woven, sixteenth-century *Story of Psyche* associated with designs by Michiel Coxcie (see Cleland n.d.a [forthcoming]). The tapestries were similarly wrongly described as "Mercury and Psyche" in the Metropolitan Museum Registrar's paperwork in 1909, although at an unknown date, "Psyche" was crossed out in ink and corrected to "Herse."

8 The receipt for the loan, no. 516, with associated memos and correspondence, is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum Registrar's records for the year 1909. I am indebted to Katharine Baetjer for suggesting this resource, and very grateful to Nina S. Maruca, senior associate registrar, for locating the material for me.

9 Breck 1910a and 1910b.

10 Accounts of Blumenthal's life and achievements are provided by George M. Goodwin (1998, pp. 138–39), by Calvin Tomkins (1989, pp. 218–26, 281–82), and by the Blumenthals' obituaries: "Mrs. Blumenthal, Art Patron, Dead," *New York Times*, September 22, 1930, p. 15, and "Geo. Blumenthal, Museum Head, Dies," *New York Times*, June 27, 1941, p. 17. Recollections of the life and personalities of Mr. and Mrs. Blumenthal are also provided by Florence's niece, Katharine Graham, in her autobiography (1997, p. 8).

11 For J. P. Morgan as a collector, see Seligman 1961, pp. 69–77, and Strouse 2000; for Morgan's biography, see Sinclair 1981. For Schiff's patronage of Baumgarten's looms in the Bronx, see Lorne 1904. For the context of their tapestry collections, see Cleland n.d.b (forthcoming).

12 The full extent of this philanthropy is chronicled in numerous newspaper clippings, from both the American and French press, stored in the George and Florence Blumenthal Scrapbook, preserved in the Library of the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts (hereafter G. & F. B. Scrapbook).

13 Seligman 1961, p. 84.

14 MMA 41.190.482; see Raggio 1964. Additional unpublished documentation pertaining to the transactions between Heilbronner and Seligmann regarding Vélez Blanco can be found in container 5 of the Raoul Heilbronner Papers, preserved in the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter R. H. Papers).

15 "Blumenthal Home under Demolition," *New York Times*, August 16, 1945, p. 30. Well-illustrated contemporary accounts of the house were published by Augusta Owen Patterson (1930) and by Francis Henry Taylor (1941); there is a very detailed description of the house by Germain Seligman (1961, pp. 142–45). The house is also discussed by Michael C. Kathrens (2005, pp. 294–304). An unpublished album, in the holdings of the Thomas J. Watson Library, MMA (call number 106.1B622F), documents the interior architecture and art collection of the residence in a series of photographic prints.

16 These and all other objects referred to in the following description of the house can now be located in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum: 41.190.43, .44; 41.190.40a; 41.190.21; 41.190.27a–e; 41.190.28a–d; 41.190.457; 41.190.370, 371; 41.100.252–.255; 41.190.471.

17 MMA 41.190.106, .107, .227, .228; see Cavallo 1993, pp. 574–85, no. 49.

18 As described in Seligman 1961, p. 143, and illustrated by Patterson 1930, p. 70.

19 MMA 41.100.195, 41.100.196; see Cavallo 1993, pp. 495–97, no. 37, and pp. 479–82, no. 34 (respectively); and 41.100.57a–.57f; see Standen 1985, pp. 199–203, no. 30. The *Story of Abraham* was the focus of the "Examining Opulence: A Set of Renaissance Tapestry Cushions" installation in the Metropolitan Museum's Antonio Ratti Textile Center (August 4, 2014–January 18, 2015), co-curated by Cristina Carr and Sarah Mallory. I am obliged to Sarah Mallory for identifying these cushion covers in use on the sofas in period photography of the room.

20 MMA 41.100.214, 41.100.215; see Cavallo 1993, pp. 377–412, no. 27, and pp. 278–84, no. 17 (respectively). Another piece from the same tapestry or set as the "Charlemagne Tapestry," also from the marquis's collection, was in a private collection in Geneva in 1921, eventually obtained by the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore; thence, by exchange, also becoming part of the Museum's collection in 1953, when the two pieces were sewn together with a third fragment, apparently acquired by the Museum from the Duveens, to form a huge composite hanging.

21 MMA 41.190.136; see Standen 1985, pp. 59–64, no. 5.

22 Letter from William Welles Bosworth to Florence Blumenthal, January 6, 1917, in the G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

23 Gimpel 1966, p. 100 (recounted following a visit paid to the house on May 27, 1919).

24 "pour la première fois dans ma vie, j'ai visité une maison idéale." Letter from Demotte to Florence Blumenthal [undated], in the G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

25 Seligman 1961, pp. 142–43.

26 Tomkins 1989, p. 281.

27 For detailed accounts of the tapestry dealers working in Europe and the United States from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, see Bremer-David 2003–4 and Cleland n.d.b (forthcoming).

28 MMA 41.100.384, .385; see Standen 1985, pp. 105–9, no. 12. Also MMA 41.190.254; 41.190.212a, .212b; 43.163.17, .18; see Standen 1985, pp. 228–30, no. 36, p. 475, no. 69, and pp. 402–4, no. 58 (respectively).

29 For example, already in the early 1880s, Joel Duveen showed a railroad magnate, probably Collis P. Huntington, a set of four Gobelins tapestries designed by Boucher, pretending that they were on order to J. P. Morgan and, by doing so, goading Huntington into making an offer for them: Duveen had purchased them in England for £12,000; he "reluctantly" sold them to Huntington for $150,000 (at that time, approximately £35,000); see Secrest 2004, pp. 25–27. By 1899, Joel's son, Joseph Duveen, would seduce a targeted client with his displays—for example, arranging a set of Boucher-designed, Beauvais-woven *Noble Pastorale* tapestries acquired from château Gâtelier in his salesroom as if in a sumptuous house, to persuade the wealthy soap manufacturer R. W. Hudson how good they would look in his newly acquired country house, as recounted by Edward Fowles (1976, p. 9). Further examples are detailed in Cleland n.d.b (forthcoming). I am very grateful to Charlotte Vignon for corresponding with me in 2006 about the Duveens' tapestry-related transactions.

30 Seligman 1961, pp. 83, 142.

31 Much of this correspondence has been preserved in the Jacques Seligmann & Co., Inc., Records, preserved in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (hereafter J. S. & Co. Records).

32 Letter from George Blumenthal to Germain Seligman, November 20, 1929 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.3 [General Correspondence], box 15, folder 36).

33 Letter from Jacques Seligmann to George Blumenthal, February 28, 1921 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.2 [Paris Office Correspondence], box 6, folder 2).

34 One of many instances being the "case of apples" thank-you letter from Jacques Seligmann to George Blumenthal, January 12, 1921 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.2 [Paris Office Correspondence], box 6, folder 2).

35 Letters from Germain Seligman to Florence Blumenthal, December 3, 1928, and from Florence Blumenthal to Germain Seligman, December [n.d.] 1928 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.3 [General Correspondence], box 15, folder 36).

36 Letter from Jacques Seligmann to George Blumenthal, October 15, 1921 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.2 [Paris Office Correspondence], box 6, folder 2).

37 Reams of surviving correspondence reveal the cost and upheaval of the transatlantic travel to the show of the Crucifixion tapestry and other pieces from the Blumenthals' collection (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.3 [General Correspondence] box 15, folder 35).

38 See Ricci 1913 and Seligmann 1928; discussed by Seligman 1961, p. 46.

39 See, for example, Simpson 1987.

40 Letter from Jacques Seligmann to George Blumenthal, January 12, 1921 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.2 [Paris Office Correspondence], box 6, folder 2).

41 Letter from Jacques Seligmann to Walter Blumenthal, March 6, 1922 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.1 [New York Office Correspondence], box 1, folder 4).

42 Letter from Jacques Seligmann to Florence Blumenthal, January 8, 1921 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.2 [Paris Office Correspondence], box 6, folder 2).

43 Letter from Germain Seligman to Florence Blumenthal, December 14, 1923 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.3 [General Correspondence], box 15, folder 34).

44 According to Fowles 1976, pp. 21–22, and Sinclair 1981, p. 149, J. P. Morgan bought the tapestry for $500,000, apparently prompted to pay more in order to have the honor of subsequently loaning it to Edward VII for his coronation at Westminster Abbey, where it was displayed behind the throne. However, in the more sanitized, "official" account published in Duveen 1935, pp. 130–33, the tapestry was much cheaper, Seligmann was at fault, and the tapestry was never actually used at the coronation. After French & Co. acquired J. P. Morgan's tapestries from his estate, they sold the tapestry to Peter A. B. Widener, whose heir Joseph E. Widener gifted it to the National Gallery of Art (1942.9.446).

45 Numerous transactions and negotiations are included in the Duveen papers—for example, regarding the sale of a set of tapestry-upholstered chairs from Baron Rothschild's collection, in an uneasy alliance between Duveen, Arnold Seligmann, and Wildenstein: cables of May 6 and November 24, 1916, and May 1 and May 5, 1917, between Duveens' New York and Paris offices, (Duveen Brothers Records, Thomas J. Watson Library, MMA, hereafter D. B. Records, box 292, folder 4).

46 Cable, of June 24, 1921, from Paris to New York (D. B. Records, box 250, folder 3). The tapestry is now in the Metropolitan Museum, 41.100.231; see Cavallo 1993, pp. 174–89, no. 8d.

47 Cable, of April 28, 1924, from Paris to New York (D. B. Records, box 293, folder 1).

48 French & Co., stock N.16867 and N.16868. The tapestries are now in the Metropolitan Museum, 38.28, .29; see Cavallo 1993, pp. 421–45, no. 29.

49 Letter from Trade Development Company, N.Y., [signature indiscernible] to Raoul Heilbronner, March 31, 1913 (R. H. Papers, container 8).

50 As recounted by Fowles 1976, p. 114.

51 Mélida 1906 and 1907. Both citations were listed on the single-sheet object record in Seligmann's files (J. S. & Co. Records: series 2.1 [Collectors], box 177, folder 27).

52 Handwritten notes added to the receipt for the initial loan, no. 516, and associated memos and correspondence (Metropolitan Museum Registrar's records for 1909).

53 French & Co.'s negative numbers for the images are N.15299, N.15300, N.15301, N.15302, N.15303, N.15304, N.15305, N.15306; a transcription of the letter from Mitchell Samuels to John Goldsmith Phillips Jr., October 13, 1943, is in departmental files of the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts.

54 Noted by Samuels in the aforementioned letter to John Goldsmith Phillips (see note 53 above).

55 The land sale was reported "In the Real Estate Field," *New York Times*, June 17, 1909, p. 12; the mayor's salary in "The Mayor's Salary," *Commercial West*, November 27, 1909, pp. 8–9. According to the Consumer Price Index, $120,000.00 in 1909 corresponds to just over $3 million today.

56 MMA 41.190.80; see Standen 1985, pp. 74–78, no. 7. For the sale of the *Saint Veronica* tapestry, which Gimpel noted in his diary for the entry on April 8, 1919, see Gimpel 1966, pp. 34, 98. The amount of $80,000 in 1919 equates to approximately $1 million in current terms, according to the Consumer Price Index. MMA 65.181.15; see Cavallo 1993, pp. 342–46, no. 23. The sale to Lehman was reported in the *New York Times*, March 2, 1916, p. 9.

57 For the *Mazarin Tapestry*, now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1942.9.446), see Fowles 1976, pp. 21–22, and Sinclair 1981, p. 149. For Mrs. Cooper's purchase, see Fowles 1976, p. 28.

58 See Rubinstein-Bloch 1926–30.

59 The first phrase cited in Seligman 1961, p. 38; the subsequent compliment paid in a letter from Jacques Seligmann to George Blumenthal, January 12, 1921 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.2 [Paris Office Correspondence], box 6, folder 2).

60 Gimpel 1966, pp. 34, 98.

61 Letter from Jacques Seligmann to Florence Blumenthal, December 1, 1921 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.1 [New York Office Correspondence], box 1 folder 4); for example, letters from Florence Blumenthal to Germain Seligman, December 2, 1921, and December 30, 1921 (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.1 [New York Office Correspondence], box 1, folder 4).

62 Barr 1974, p. 115.

63 Seligman 1961, p. 83; Mrs. Gardner's statement was made in a letter to Edmund Hill, June 21, 1917, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum files, cited by Chong 2007, p. 213.

64 For example, in Mrs. Blumenthal's correspondence with the firm (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.1 [New York Office Correspondence], box 1 folder 4); there are also numerous references to Mrs. Blumenthal in Miss Buckingham's letters to and from the Seligman(n)s (J. S. & Co. Records: series 1.1 [New York Office Correspondence], box 1 folder 5 and series 1.2 [Paris Office Correspondence], box 6, folder 2). In his memoirs, Seligman (1961, p. 89) alluded to the Blumenthal influence over Buckingham. However, toward the end of their acquaintance, Mrs. Blumenthal's sway seems to have waned: one particular exchange, from May to June 1924, details a particular transaction in which Miss Buckingham, very embarrassed, requests Germain Seligman to take back and reimburse her (almost $3,000) for a group of furniture that Mrs. Blumenthal had urged her to buy; she also expressly asks Seligman not to mention this to Mrs. Blumenthal (box 6, folder 2).

65 The Art Institute of Chicago, 1922.5370; see Brosens et al. 2008, pp. 56–61, no. 5.

66 As recounted by Gimpel (1966, pp. 100–101). This tragedy as impetus for Mrs. Blumenthal's collecting activities was also alluded to by Seligman (1961, p. 144). An unsigned, typewritten eulogy for Florence Blumenthal, pasted into the G. & F. B. Scrapbook, reiterates her devotion to the child and the shadow his death cast.

67 Discussed in context by Calvin Tomkins (1989, pp. 218–26, 281–82).

68 A second unpublished scrapbook, in the holdings of the Thomas J. Watson Library (call number N5220.B681941Q) documents the objects in the Blumenthal collection received by the Metropolitan Museum as gifts, and also includes typewritten excerpts from the last will and testament of George Blumenthal. In 1943, a special installation was opened, accompanied by a publication: *Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal* (Ivins 1943).

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