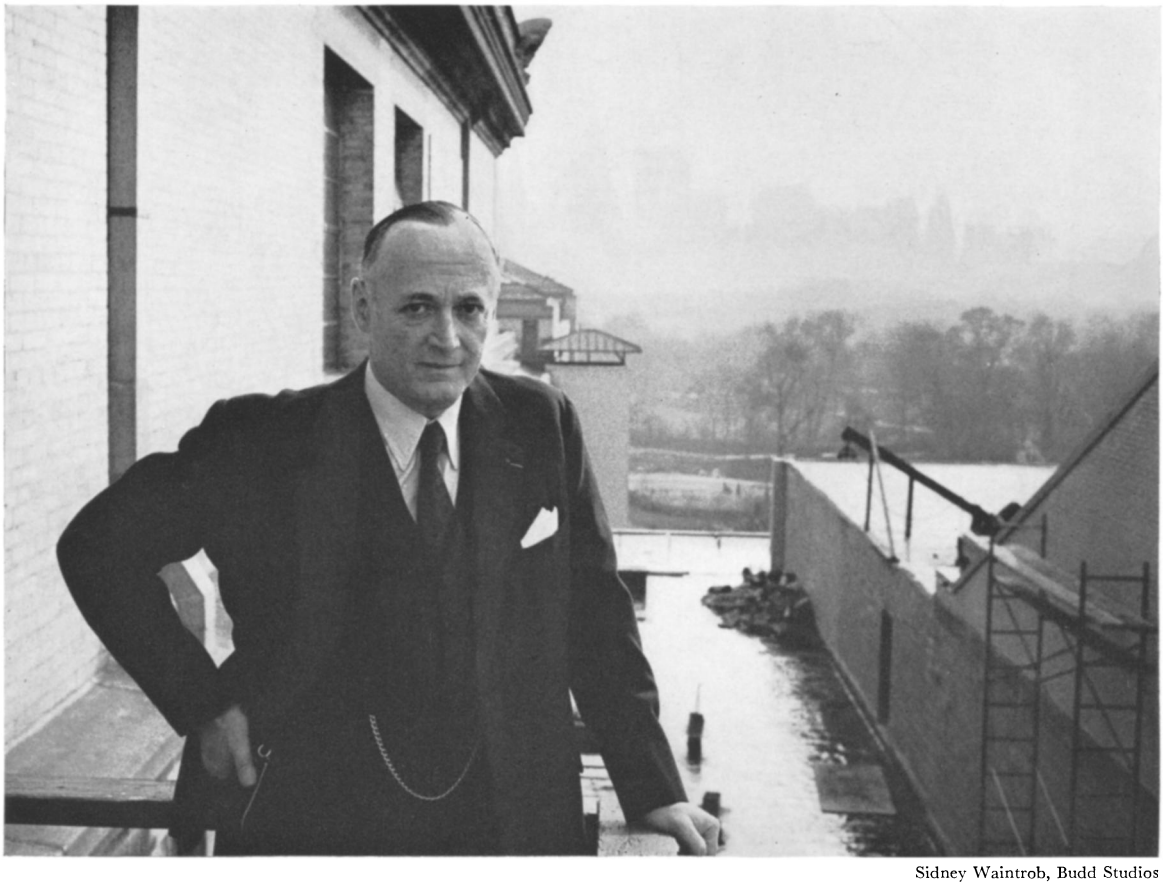
# JAMES J. RORIMER

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

Summer 1966, Part Two

JAMES J. RORIMER



Sidney Waintrob, Budd Studios

JAMES J. RORIMER

September 7, 1905 – May 11, 1966

"A good start, a willingness – even eagerness – to work beyond the call of duty, a sense of fair play, and a recognition of opportunities before and when they arrive. In other words, it is important to find a course and steer it." In these words James Rorimer once answered a request for "a formula for success." They sum up the deep sense of responsibility and efficiency that he brought to his position as director of the Metropolitan Museum. But his success encompasses more than leadership.

The success of the director of a museum is often measured in statistics and acquisitions: we can say, for instance, that in the eleven years of his directorship, attendance and membership have all but doubled, exhibition areas have been increased by forty-two per cent, almost half the galleries have been renovated and reinstalled, and that new buildings for the library, Junior Museum, and service departments have been constructed. We can say that works of art of the utmost importance have been purchased for the collections: among them, the Annunciation altarpiece by Robert Campin, the sixty-five Greek vases from the Hearst collection, the ivory cross from Bury St. Edmunds, and, of course, Rembrandt's Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer.

The scope of James Rorimer's accomplishments, however, lies far beyond these numbers and lists. He once wrote: "A museum man must love works of art with a passion. And in so doing he wants to share his enthusiasms with others." This passion, this sharing shaped his influence. We print here words from his writings and speeches to convey some of the power of his enthusiasm, and three essays, spoken at the memorial service at The Cloisters a few days after his death, to mirror the response of his friends and associates.

No formal statement can do full justice to his qualities of mind and heart, and we at the Museum can signify our admiration for James Rorimer in no more appropriate way than to determine to carry forward, with a distinction that would do him honor, his plans, his standards, and his goals.

ARTHUR A. HOUGHTON, JR., *President*

Jan Yoors

For us who worked with him, who were his companions at the Museum, it is impossible to be here at The Cloisters and to realize that James Rorimer is gone.

Here, in this beautiful place that he created, his presence is everywhere alive. It is here in these paintings, these statues, these tapestries, that we see and above all feel most vividly that extraordinary quality that was so very much his own: his love, his intensely sensitive feeling for a work of art in all its varied aspects.

His eye was unerring in its judgment of beauty and excellence. He added to this a passionate interest in every detail, down to the most minute, of its composition, its structure, its surface. When he examined something – a statue, an ivory, a piece of goldsmith's work, a painting – he made a contact with it that was so powerful, so immediate, that one felt he had exhausted its every possibility, that he possessed it completely. I shall never forget the brightness and penetration of his gaze, the sensitivity and sureness of his touch. He also had a capacity for painstaking and conscientious research, which unfolded the whole of the object's history in relation to art and to ownership, correlating with it everything he had learned in a lifetime of looking and learning. The hunt for the answer to such a problem, no matter how complex, was a source of the keenest pleasure and satisfaction to him.

James Rorimer's life was centered in the Metropolitan Museum. He came to it as a young man of twenty-two, directly from Harvard, and served it with complete dedication until the day he died. Without reserve he gave it all of his great vitality and gifts. Its world-wide fame and its prestige today are largely due to him.

He was passionately determined that the Museum should have the best that became available anywhere in the world. He had the ability to grasp an opportunity, to take action without a moment's hesitation. He was also capable of waiting, sometimes for years, for the opportunity to come. His discretion was proverbial. If obstacles stood in his way he was ready to make any honorable sacrifice to overcome them, no matter what the cost in time and energy. When he negotiated he outwitted his opponents with the skill of a chess player and the courage of a lion. But he was also diplomatic and charming, and attracted to the Museum prodigious gifts of works of art and money. Examples of his achievements shine out everywhere in our collections – the Unicorn tapestries, the Merode altarpiece, the Chalice of Antioch, Rembrandt's Aristotle, to mention but a few of the most extraordinary and magnificent.

He had the vision to see exactly how great masterpieces would fit best into our vast and complex buildings and how their beauty and meaning could be most effectively communicated to our visitors. This can be seen in the exhibition of such widely differing material as the Greek vases, the monumental sculpture from China and the ancient Near East, and the French eighteenth-century furniture. This gift for sensitive showmanship had many facets, and it was combined with an understanding of architecture that made it possible to adapt successfully the choir screen from Valladolid and the Blumenthal Patio to completely foreign surroundings, and to create these Cloisters, which are a monument of taste, of judgment, and of restraint. His success can be mea-

sured by the Museum's attendance, which increased by millions during his years as director.

These are the outward manifestations of his talents. There was another side, not visible to the outside world. It was the human aspect of his work, his relationship to us who worked with him on the Museum's staff. His leadership was evident everywhere. Each one of us, however small his position, always felt that he was interested in what we were doing and that his sharp eye would see and judge the quality of our work. The measure of his participation in what we did is devastatingly provided by the dreadful emptiness we feel today.

He took a personal interest in everyone, particularly in the young, whom he especially enjoyed. He himself was always full of fresh ideas that he liked to discuss with them. They in turn have learned and profited from his vast experience. His constant efforts to attract them to the Museum and to offer opportunities for training and travel have given us one of the youngest curatorial groups in our history.

James Rorimer, unlike most men, does not fit into any classification. He was unique. In our profession, which is new, hardly fifty years old, he will long stand out as one of those who gave it form, and he will be a model for future generations.

He has left an indelible mark on this Museum and on this great city. But the deepest mark is in the minds and hearts of those who worked with him. The spirit we knew, the radiation of his personality will always be with us as a part of everything we do. All our hearts go out to his family in their tragic loss. We feel they are as much a part of the Museum as he was. As for me, I know that every time I look at a work of art and struggle with the problems it presents, I will think of him and realize how much I valued his advice and how much I miss his friendship.

THEODORE ROUSSEAU, *Curator of European Paintings*



Today, with us, in all the museums of the world, and every place where Art is a high human value, there are people who share our sorrow and measure the importance of the man they have just lost. James Rorimer disappears like a combatant of the advance guard in this struggle that Humanity is pursuing for the progress of the arts and of culture. We find the meaning of this combat first in this thought of Emerson: "Art is the need to create. . . . Nothing less than the creation of man and nature is its end." And a recent remark by André Malraux on the vocation of the contemporary museum completes the thought of the great American philosopher: "The treasure of the ages,

the living past . . . does not consist of works that happen to have survived by accident, but of works that bear in themselves, like a phosphorescence, that power of survival by which they speak to us. The masses do not choose their fantasies, and we choose our museums much less than we suppose. But confronting the great shapeless dream surging out of the unconscious of crowds, with its imperious demons, its childish angels and cheap heroes, stand the only forces as powerful as they, and that we acknowledge only by their victory over death."

More than a century separates these two texts. Now, during this period, some men (it does not matter what countries they are from) have patiently, obstinately worked toward the realization of this ideal. They have incarnated this new idea of the museum; they have been in their life, in their actions, in their thoughts, the museum itself; these few men have passionately served at the same time their countries and Humanity; in their places they have changed the shapes of civilization and given to all men new chances for happiness and creation. James Rorimer – we knew it yesterday, we know it even more today – belongs to this small cohort of men who have profoundly changed the relations between human societies and the arts, and who have made of the museum, for a country and for the entire world, at the same time a mirror and a center of radiance. And it is enough for me to evoke James Rorimer going through his museum with friends from everywhere, with colleagues, with statesmen. You felt then, under his gaze and by his voice, the Museum take on a new dimension and a new life. James knew – even more profoundly, he felt – that a museum does not reach its veritable significance until it radiates naturally; this is why the Metropolitan Museum has become one of those places where Humanity recognizes itself in its universal values and hopes. And James Rorimer, in his ardor, in his enthusiasm, in the keenness of daily struggles, has given to his museum, in a natural way, this planetary dimension, which everyone recognizes in it today, in Paris or London, in Rome or Moscow, in Tokyo, Dakar, or Rio de Janeiro.

Why? First because James carried in him this idea of the Museum; he was the Museum itself. And during these years when I have had the chance on numerous occasions to work with him, I have discovered in him two forces that constantly carried him along in the overactive life he led: the love of artistic objects and the need to communicate with others. He loved the objects for themselves, and not merely for his museum. He is among those who – and that will also remain one of these titles for posterity – fought to protect works from that destruction that threatens fatally every human creation. And this is why in 1943 he joined the American Army, and became Chief of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section of the Seventh Army. He thus saved an incalculable number of works of art, and Europe will always be grateful to him for this. I also remember having more than one time glanced through with him that book he was so proud of, because it revealed in a way his *raison d'être – Survival: The Salvage and Protection of Art in War*. This love and respect for objects was accompanied by a stirring sense of human relations. He was an ardent combatant led by an ideal, and conscious of working both for his country and for the universal cause of mankind. But at the same time he had a wonderful sense of friendship; he knew that a great human

work is not only the product of a man or of a team, but of a sort of general accord. And this is why, and I am here to testify to it, James Rorimer was loved and respected; we all had proof of this, here in New York and in this very place, during the ICOM reunion (International Council of Museums); he was the natural center of this meeting.

James Rorimer will remain thus in our memory, his work being inseparable from what he was in himself and in the radiance of his personality. All the museums in the world are thinking today of their lost friend and feel themselves in mourning with the Metropolitan Museum. The loss is the same for all of us, for our work is a common one; and it will remain so in following the example of James Rorimer. He held a great place among us. The essential for tomorrow is to remain loyal to his idea of universal and human communion with Beauty.

EDOUARD MOROT-SIR, *Cultural Counselor to the French Embassy*

Photography in the Fine Arts

In doing honor to the memory of James J. Rorimer we do but justice to the worth of his ideas and accomplishments, all encompassed within a firmly established philosophy of art viewed in history, that is the past, and society, that is the present. He knew well that the instant response, however popular, paled beside the measured and patiently developed reply. Steeped in history, he cultivated the virtues of patience and direction. Possessed by the grasp of quality and connoisseurship, he knew and measured the worth of man's visible heritage, and determined, in the midst of constant change and diminution, to preserve and enhance that heritage so that it might be visible to anyone with eyes to see.

This was not easy in an age obsessed by change and by the tyranny of the new. Before the American Association of Museums on May 21, 1958 he dared to define artistic activity with the Aristotelian phrase, "a certain productive state of mind under

the guidance of true reason," and to demand that only the best was good enough for habitués of an art museum. His secret and relentless pursuit of quality established standards that are, and will be, the envy of all who seriously care about what is to be seen in a museum of art. The highest professional standards of selection, display, and elucidation were constantly, even obsessively, his concern; and the results are to be seen in the reaches of that greatest of all American art museums, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and at their purest, most compelling, and serene, in his beloved Cloisters where today we meet in lonely sadness.

The Cloisters is the perfect expression of James Rorimer's great contribution to our lives. It was his creation, his dearest treasure, his unique vision of a union of history, art, and nature that has given so much to all of us – knowledge and, even better, pure delight. He proved that, given enough money, time, patience, taste, knowledge, and good fortune, one could creatively display the best of the Middle Ages in an alien climate and environment so that one believed – was convinced of – its truth. Foreign skeptics were put to rout – even better, converted. One can truthfully say that The Cloisters reversed the line of giving from the Old World to the New, and gave to the lands of its origin a museum standard, a new benchmark to be envied, emulated, and, more rarely, equaled.

I cannot but think of Suger, abbot of St. Denis from 1122 to 1151. His book accounting for his administration might well be considered an anticipation of James Rorimer's direction of The Cloisters and of the Metropolitan Museum. He wrote, "We summoned the best painters I could find from different regions, and reverently caused these walls to be repaired. . . . I completed this all the more gladly because I had wished to do it, if ever I should have an opportunity, even while I was a pupil at school." And later, "Solomon's riches could not have sufficed for his Temple any more than did ours for this work had not the same Author of the same work abundantly supplied his attendants. The identity of the author and the work provides a sufficiency for the worker.

"In carrying out such plans my first thought was for the concordance and harmony of the ancient and the new work. By reflection, by inquiry, and by investigation through different regions of remote districts we endeavored to learn where we might obtain marble columns or columns the equivalent thereof." And even so did James Rorimer in transforming a curious and romantic ruin on these heights into this consummate work of art.

If his humor was reserved for private and intimate occasions, his seriousness did him credit in a métier much given to entertainment. Indeed this seriousness was his finest psychological contribution to his colleagues everywhere. Works of art and art museums meant everything to him and they were rightly demanding of the most tenacious and strenuous efforts of muscle, mind, and heart. The Metropolitan must be not merely the largest, but the best – and so it was.

He left no great tomes of written scholarship, but something more difficult and rewarding. I cannot but think of him, whether at the farm of Bigsbluff, or in the mezzanine offices of the Metropolitan, or here in the tower retreat of The Cloisters, in the image of the gardener in Richard Wilbur's poem "He Was" –

. . . For all I heard
Of all his labors, I can now recall
Never a single word
Until he went in the dead of fall
To the drowsy underground,
Having planted a young orchard with so great care
In that last year that none was lost, and May
Aroused them all, the leaves saying the land's
Praise for the livening clay,
And the found voice of his buried hands
Rose in the sparrowing air.

SHERMAN E. LEE, *Director, The Cleveland Museum of Art*

Alfred Eisenstaedt, LIFE Magazine


# JAMES J. RORIMER

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, September 7, 1905
Married Katherine Newton Serrell, 1942. Children: Anne Newton; Louis
Died in New York City, May 11, 1966

A.B. Harvard University, 1927
Assistant, Department of Decorative Arts, 1927-1929
Assistant Curator, Department of Decorative Arts, 1929-1932
Associate Curator, Department of Decorative Arts, 1932-1934
Curator, Department of Medieval Art, 1934-1955
Director of The Cloisters, 1949-1966
Director and Trustee, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1955-1966

United States Army, 1943-1946
- Private in the Infantry
- Lieutenant and Captain for the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section, in Normandy, Paris, and Germany
- Chief of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section, Seventh Army, Western Military District

Decorations:
- Bronze Star, 1945
- European Theatre Ribbon (4 battle stars), 1944-1945
- Croix de Guerre (Silver Star), 1945
- Member of the Legion of Honor, 1947
- Officer of the Legion of Honor, 1957

Médaille de Molière, 1955
Dutch Treat Club, 1955
L.H.D. Western Reserve University, 1956
LL.D. Union College, 1957
D.F.A. Hamilton College, 1957
New York Board of Trade Citation, 1957
Handel Medal (New York City), 1959
Elsie de Wolfe Award (American Institute of Decorators, New York Chapter), 1960
Cross of the Commander of the Order of the Dannebrog (Denmark), 1960

Ohioana Career Medal, 1962
Sterling Silversmiths Guild of America Award for Cultural Leadership, 1962
St. Nicholas Society Medal of Merit, 1963
D.F.A. Adelphi College, 1963
Greater New York Fund Award of Merit, 1963
D.F.A. New York University, 1964
Officer in the Order of Arts and Letters of the French Government, 1964
Bronze Medallion of the City of New York, 1965
University School Graduate Award, Cleveland, 1965

Advisory Council for Department of Art and Archaeology, Columbia University
Art Advisory Committee, Dartmouth College, 1960
Board of Advisors, Dumbarton Oaks
Harvard Overseer's Committee, to visit Department of Fine Arts and Fogg Art Museum, 1956-1963
Institute of Fine Arts Advisory Committee, New York University
Visiting Committee for the Visual Arts, Western Reserve University, 1964

American Association of Museums (Chairman, Art Technical Section, 1948; Council Member, 1956-1962)
Asia Society (Trustee, 1956; Executive Committee, 1957)
Association of Art Museum Directors (Executive Committee, 1963)
City of New York: Art Committee, Salute to Seasons (Chairman); Consular Corps, Hospitality Committee, Mayor's Reception Committee; Committee 1964 World's Fair; Advisory Committee on Art to the Office of Design, Construction and Physical Plant of the Board of Education, 1963; Citizen's Advisory Committee to New York City Office of Cultural Affairs, 1963
Cleveland Institute of Art (Advisor)
Cultural Institutions Group of New York City (Chairman, 1962-1963)
Fund of the Republic (Juror for Robert Sherwood Television Award, 1956-1959)
International Council of Museums (Vice-President, Executive Committee, 1962-1965; President, United States National Committee for ICOM, 1965-1966)
International Center of Romanesque Art (Honorary Chairman)
Medieval Academy of America (Councillor, 1955; Executive Committee, 1957-1958)
Museum of the City of New York (Ex-officio Trustee, 1955)
Museums Council of New York City (Chairman, 1950-1951)
Commissioners Advisory Committee on Museum Resources, New York State Museums Association (Vice-President, 1961)
Swedish Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities (Foreign Corresponding Member)
Advisory Committee on Cultural Information, United States Information Agency
United States National Committee for the Preservation of Nubian Monuments

Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, Florence
American Academy of Arts and Letters (Fellow)
American Academy of Political and Social Sciences
American Federation of Arts
American Geographical Society (Fellow)
American Institute of Architects (Honorary)
American Institute of Decorators (Honorary)
American Society of the French Legion of Honor
Archaeological Institute of America
Architectural League of New York (Honorary)
Art and Antique Dealers League (Honorary)
Botanical Society of New York
Century Association
Cleveland Museum of Art (Fellow for Life)
College Art Association of America
Fifth Avenue Club
France-America Society
French Institute in the United States
Grolier Club
Hajji Baba Club (Honorary)
Harvard Club
International Institute of Conservation
National Council of United States Art
National Sculpture Society (Honorary)
New-York Historical Society (Associate)
Pierpont Morgan Library (Fellow)
Société Française d'Archéologie

BOOKS BY MR. RORIMER:

*Ultra-Violet Rays and Their Use in the Examination of Works of Art*, 1931
*A Guide to the Collections* (Medieval Section), 1934
*The Cloisters – The Building and the Collection of Medieval Art*, 1938 (third revised edition, 1962)
*The Unicorn Tapestries*, 1938 (revised edition, 1943)
*Medieval Jewelry*, 1940
*Medieval Monuments at The Cloisters – As They Were and As They Are*, 1941
*The Unicorn Tapestries at The Cloisters*, 1945 (revised edition, 1962)
*Medieval Tapestries*, 1947
*Survival: The Salvage and Protection of Art in War*, 1950
*The Nine Heroes Tapestries at The Cloisters*, 1953

The Ford Foundation

*I'm going to have fun in this job because I like works of art.*

On being appointed Director, *The New York Times*, August 4, 1955

*Art knows no boundaries, and culture is one of the strongest links between civilized men.*

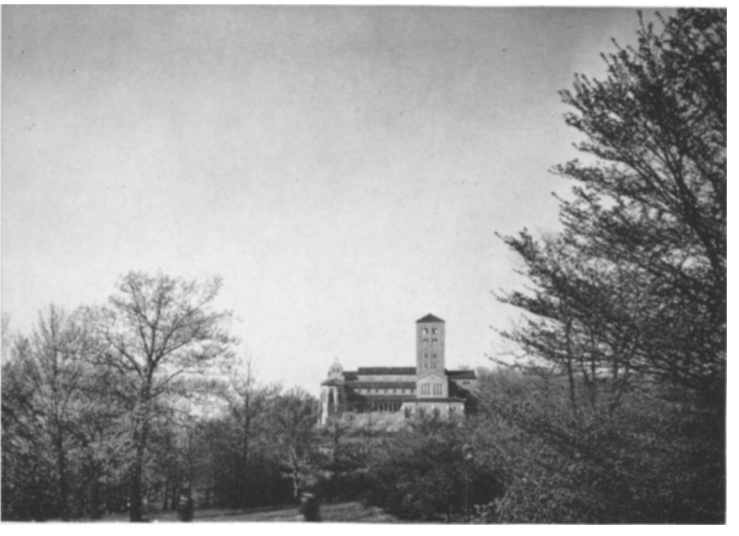
*The New York Times Magazine*, March 11, 1956

*A fuller understanding of beauty comes from a knowledge of man's past artistic accomplishments. Never before has there been so universal a desire for this knowledge and understanding. Discrimination can be learned, and as never before our educational processes are at work toward this end. Our public is quick to recognize the beauty of a stained-glass window, a unicorn in captivity in a tapestry, or a Rembrandt portrait; but the appeal of art, beyond illustration or function, grows with time, information, and concentration.*

Address at Union College, February 25, 1957

*To examine a painting with X ray alone and then not look at it again is madness. You must begin and end with the work of art itself.*

Interview with Beverly Wolter, *Winston-Salem Journal*, April 20, 1963



Photographs taken by Mr. Rorimer of the future site of The Cloisters in Fort Tryon Park, 1933, and The Cloisters in 1946

*When I graduated from school I was asked to take a part in helping plan and build The Cloisters in Fort Tryon Park.*

*Our patron had been to Kenilworth Castle ruins in England, and had authorized a firm of respected architects to design, with the Hudson River as background, a setting in stone in which could be reunited fragments of south French and Spanish architectural elements – the old Romanesque stones that had been arranged pictorially in the old Cloisters by George Grey Barnard in 1913. It was to be an architectural ensemble reminiscent of the pseudo-medieval architecture of the American college campus. For a moment I thought that I would prefer an assemblage of fragments reminiscent of Piranesi's views of ancient Rome. And then some of my younger architect friends, contemporaries at the time, urged that we have a modern building with all the freshness and functionalism of the Bauhaus school of thought.*

*Young as I was at the time, I summoned up my courage, and though until then my part in the planning of The Cloisters had been of an extra pair of hands to keep the blueprints and sketches from rustling as they were processed across the conference table, it was possible to inject the idea that a new architect be invited to study the problem of how The Cloisters should look.*

*When the prospective donor saw the models after two-and-a-half quiet years devoted to model building, he asked, "Is this the way The Cloisters will look?" With some hesitancy I replied, "No, Mr. Rockefeller, this is the way it could look if you wanted it to."*

Address at the Parsons School of Design, May 26, 1962

*The simplicity of the building grew out of a desire to show these examples of Romanesque and Gothic architecture and architectural details, together with tapestries, sculpture, furniture, and metalwork, in uncluttered and unconfused surroundings. By purposely not placing objects here and there for the sake of obtaining dubious decorative effects, it has been possible to avoid the kinds of settings that have made many private houses, and even museums, the anathema of some of our contem-*

*poraries. So also reconditioning the exhibits themselves has been avoided wherever possible. . . . We wanted to show the various treasures in such a way that they would be looked at for their intrinsic values rather than for new arrangements imposed upon them by romantic architects and craftsmen. Truthful, archaeological reconstructions burdened with a minimum of artistic inventiveness were sought for whenever there was a choice.*

*Medieval Monuments at The Cloisters – As They Were and As They Are*, 1941

*If I were to have my choice of any medieval museum in Europe or The Cloisters, with our view and whole development, my decision would be clear. I think the public would benefit most from what we've built up here.*

Interview for *Time*, July 28, 1955

Acme Special Services

Army Signal Corps

*I followed Goering all the way from Normandy to Austria. We started out to preserve monuments and to promote better relations. We ended up catching thieves and their loot.*

*I got to Paris on liberation day, and from that day forward I had to keep my eyes and ears open trying to find what big and little looters had taken.*

*Whenever I got to a new place the first thing I poked into was the incinerator. More often than not there'd be revealing records in it.*

*I used to let the air out of my bicycle tires and pretend to have a puncture in front of the house of Goering's art buyer in Paris and eavesdrop.*

*But the best sources in the beginning were the records kept by the French museum people and by members of the underground.*

*Of course it was more fun, if fun it can be called, to go after individual items, but we usually dealt with salt mines and trains full of looted art.*

*Cue*, July 5, 1947

[*In the castle of Neuschwanstein*] *we were guided to a hidden thick steel door; this one locked with two keys. Inside there were two large chests of world-famous Rothschild jewels and box upon box of jewel-encrusted metalwork. There were also rare manuscripts and more than a thousand pieces of silver from the David-Weill and other collections.*

*Survival: The Salvage and Protection of Art in War*, 1950


*I still love my old farm, though nothing comes up the way you plan it. It is always a challenge. While you sit on the porch you have known for fifty years and look upon the hills and fields waiting for the next hurricane, leak in the pool, or weeds in the tennis court, it is still home. Even if they do put a six-lane highway right through it, there are still tulip trees and hemlocks.*

*Town and Country*, 1961

*In my profession it is said that you cannot be a good director without liking food and knowing about it. Both my predecessor in office and I wanted to cook our own favorite dishes for the openings. I have even wondered whether a gourmet could be a gourmet without being a gourmand – most museum administrators are portly, or at least always dieting.*

Address at the Food Editors Dinner, October 5, 1960

Photographs: top, Anne N. Rorimer; center, Al Wegener for *The New York Times;* below, Ben Martin for *Time*

The photographs on this page were taken during the auction of Rembrandt's Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer. Upper right, by Ben Martin for *Time*; others, by Steve Schapiro for Black Star

*Don't buy works of art unless you enjoy them and then want to have others enjoy them with you. A Dürer print is what it means to its proud possessor, not a bargain today and a bonanza tomorrow. I do not look at a work of art at home or in the Museum and think of it in terms of price – past, present, or future. It has a message from its period, from its creator, a meaning for me, and perhaps one that others know and I am yet to discover. Hindsight, foresight are wonderful, but for a collector the viewing of a fine work of art is the present, or, as the advertisers say, "The time is now."*

Address before The North Carolina State Art Society, April 22, 1963

*What a pity that neither taste nor knowledge alone suffice, even if one has the necessary wherewithal to pay one's bills. No, one must have eagerness, or call it enthusiasm, and it must be tempered with restraint. We must have judgment, but without the narrow limitations of the scholar who is trying to know more and more about less and less. One must also have the breadth of the scholar who is trying to know more and more about more and more. In other words, the more of yourself you give to collecting, if you have the aptitude, the stamina, and the patience of Job, the better are your chances of being a good collector. I have waited more than twenty years to flush a waiting treasure from its impenetrable surroundings, but there is only one standard for successful collecting – quality – and that includes being sure that what you have is what you think it is, and then getting a sense of order into things that you have, then perhaps relating them to your home or your museum, and then to your guests and to the public.*

Address before The North Carolina State Art Society, April 22, 1963

*If a wonderful object comes along, we should get it even if we are strong there. I'd rather see a masterpiece by an artist already represented in the collection than a second-rate picture by a painter who isn't.*

Interview with Aline B. Saarinen, *The New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 1955

*The collections come first – the objects, the paintings. We must make these objects intelligible to the public. We must make them intelligible even if that calls for a smoking room here and there in this great building covering four city blocks. Or if it calls for a good restaurant.*

*We don't want the public to think a visit to the museum is a painful ordeal. If more decent toilets make it easier to see Titians, let's have more decent toilets.*

*With accessibility to our objects comes understanding. Somehow art on a pedestal must be brought nearer to the visitor. If we take our collections for granted, we risk becoming a static museum, but there's such a thing as too busy a program. We mustn't be all things to all people. We must decide what we can offer best to our public.*

Interview with W. G. Rogers, *The Sun*, Baltimore, November 15, 1959

*The New York Times*

William F. Pons

*Running good museums involves more than good housekeeping, however important that may be. Without the careful piecing together of man's history by the scholar, the showman can at best captivate his audience for only a little while. We have even greater need for careful scholarship in the museums of the United States than ever before; the need for trained conservators and restorers is likewise all-important for the actual preservation of our artistic bounties. It is far easier to find a purchaser for a temporarily fashionable painting, than funds for its selection, publication, and conservation.*

Address at The Cleveland Museum of Art, March 4, 1958

*When the installation becomes more important than the objects to be shown, the museum designer has failed in the principal requirements of a museum – the showing to best advantage of its works of art.*

Notes for a speech, April 22, 1960

This passage from *An Art Museum for the People* by Frank Jewett Mather was kept by Mr. Rorimer in his file of working papers:

My successor must serve not only my public but his own. If he finds worthy of the galleries many objects which I have kept in the study department, why, so much the better. His taste ought to be better than mine, his public more enlightened than that of to-day. Indeed, the strength of this kind of a museum is that it responds sensitively to the best contemporary taste, giving each generation what it is most prepared to appreciate. Because we realize the relativity of our own judgments we alienate nothing but duplicates. We are unwilling to tie the hands of those to come. And precisely in the flexibility you note lies our advantage over the merely archaeological museums. Their classification is abstract, impersonal, rigid, with the result that at any one time half their galleries are dead as regards the people. We have no dead galleries.