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GEORGE AND FLORENCE BLUMENTHAL: A COLLECTING PARTNERSHIP IN  
THE GILDED AGE, 1858-1941

A thesis submitted by  
Rebecca L. Tilles

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Art History

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

## ABSTRACT

This thesis demonstrates the importance of the collecting partnership of George and Florence Blumenthal while contributing to the growing body of knowledge on twentieth-century collecting in America. I argue that through their collaboration, the Blumenthals used their homes and collection to fulfill a public educational role.

The method of investigation includes an in-depth biography of George and Florence Blumenthal, including family origins, Jewish identity, and philanthropic activities in order to illustrate how their different family backgrounds helped shape and influence their collecting and philanthropic partnership as a married couple. The thesis also examines the Blumenthal's residences in New York and in France, including the architects, designers, and dealers involved, in order to argue Florence's leadership role in their design and orchestration and the houses' public function. Finally, the thesis will assess the Blumenthal's legacy today and the bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1941.



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## Introduction

The main goal of this thesis is to demonstrate the importance of the collecting partnership of George Blumenthal (1858-1941) and Florence Meyer (1873-1930) within the discipline of twentieth-century collecting in the United States and Europe. As a result of Florence's premature death at the age of fifty-seven, and no direct descendants or surviving residences, the Blumenthal's legacy has been somewhat overlooked and undermined until present. Additionally, George Blumenthal's role as collector and arbiter of taste has been privileged over Florence's, thus she has not received adequate recognition for her significant role in building the collection and contributing to many philanthropic organizations. Sources indicate that the Blumenthals' taste for collecting was fueled by the traumatic loss of their only child and their art collections were perhaps initially purchased for private appreciation in their highly decorative domestic interiors. This thesis will also argue that, through their collaboration and dual contributions to collecting, the Blumenthals used their collection to fulfill a public educational role, rather than a means of self-promotion. While the Blumenthals were by no means the only example of a collecting couple during this period, they were part of a generation that focused on their legacy, philanthropy, and the formation of museum collections, an important shift from the Gilded Age decadence to donors and benefactors of American museums.<sup>1</sup>

The Blumenthals met and married in New York at the end of the nineteenth century, a moment of rapid economic growth when wealthy financiers, businessmen, and industrialists, often of humble origin, showcased their tremendous power and fortunes by commissioning leading architects and designers to design and construct immense estates and relied on dealers to acquire and compete for costly works of art. Between the 1890s

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Gilded Age," coined by writer Mark Twain in *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (1873) refers to the period of economic growth and industrialization in the United States from about 1870-1900.

and 1930s, a new type of collector emerged whose dominating motive was to build a wide-ranging “Great Master” collection composed of the highest quality of works of art.<sup>2</sup> As the supply of Old Master paintings became increasingly harder to find and their prices mounted rapidly, an increased tendency towards specialization in collecting also occurred. This thesis will place George and Florence Blumenthal in the context of other collectors in the United States and in Europe during this period in order to demonstrate their contributions within the history of collecting. Relevant case studies of other notable contemporary collectors, both Jewish and non, will also help position the Blumenthals within the various patterns of collecting and determine which collectors served as models.

Among these new wealthy and notable collectors, various patterns of collecting developed, often resulting in eventual bequests to American institutions or the creation of private museums. Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) acquired rare books and manuscripts, fossils, architectural casts, and modern art in Pittsburg; John Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913) strove to establish the greatest assemblage of works of art of all kinds through mass accumulation in London and New York; William K. Vanderbilt (1849-1920) and Alva Vanderbilt (1853-1933) launched the taste for French eighteenth-century-style interiors in New York and Newport, Rhode Island; Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) collected Northern paintings, French furniture, bronzes, and ceramics in New York; Henry E. Huntington (1850-1927) purchased rare books, English paintings, and French decorative arts in Los Angeles; Henry Walters (1848-1931), like Morgan, acquired preformed collections on a vast scale, and Joseph Widener (1871-1943) collected Dutch seventeenth century and French nineteenth century paintings, both building upon inherited collections from their father; and Andrew Mellon (1855-1937) amassed old master paintings and sculpture in Washington, D.C. Female collectors, such as Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924) in Boston predominantly collected Medieval and Renaissance Italian paintings, sculpture, furniture, textiles, silver and ceramics, and Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887-1973) focused primarily on eighteenth and nineteenth-

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<sup>2</sup> W.G. Constable, *Art collecting in the United States of America, An Outline of a History* (London and New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1964), p. 97.

century French and Russian paintings and decorative arts in New York, Palm Beach, and Washington, D.C.<sup>3</sup>

Like many of these contemporaneous examples, the Blumenthals shared similar characteristics and were interested in related aspects of collecting, focusing primarily on Medieval and Renaissance paintings and decorative arts, Flemish tapestries, architectural fragments, and French eighteenth-century decoration. While the couple also designed and constructed a Renaissance palazzo in New York, as well as two houses in France, in which to showcase their extensive collection, the Manhattan residence was built with the

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on Carnegie, see Robert J. Gangewere, *Palace of Culture: Andrew Carnegie's Museums and Library in Pittsburg* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 2011); on Morgan, see Francis Henry Taylor, *Pierpont Morgan as Collector and Patron, 1837-1913* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1970); Jean Strouse, "J. Pierpont Morgan Financier and Collector," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (Winter 2000); and Flaminia Gennari Santori, *The Melancholy of Masterpieces, Old Master Paintings in America 1900-1914* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2003); on the Vanderbilts, see Louis Auchincloss, *The Vanderbilt Era: Profiles of a Gilded Age*. 1st ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1990); on Frick, see Colin B. Bailey, *Building the Frick Collection: An Introduction to the House and Its Collections*. (New York: Frick Collection in association with Scala, 2006); on the Huntingtons, see Bennett, Shelley M. "Henry and Arabella Huntington: The Staging of Eighteenth-Century French Art by Twentieth Century Americans," in *French Art of the Eighteenth Century at the Huntington* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008); on Walters, see William R. Johnston, *William and Henry Walters: The Reticent Collectors* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press in association with the Walters Art Gallery, 1999); on Widener, see Joseph E. Widener, *The Joseph Widener Collection* (New York: Rogers-Kellogg Stillson, 1932); on Mellon, see Andrew W. Mellon, *Paintings and Sculpture from the Mellon Collection* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1953); on Gardner, see Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's culture: American philanthropy and art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Morris Carter, *Isabella Stewart Gardner and Fenway Court* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925); and on Post, see Estella M. Chung, *Marjorie Merriweather Post: The Life Behind the Luxury* (Lewes, UK: D. Giles Limited, 2019).

future of the collection and public access in mind. Another significant differentiating characteristic that set the Blumenthals apart was their collaborative collecting partnership while upholding individual roles in forming and employing the collection and spaces.

During the early twentieth century, many of these private mansions and art collections in America were opened for public view, such as the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (1903), The Huntington in Pasadena, California (1919), The Phillips Collection (1921), The Barnes Foundation (1925), and The Frick Collection in New York (1935), forming what is known today as the “house museum.”<sup>4</sup> Private mansions and art collections in Europe were also transformed into public museums during this period, including the Wallace Collection in London (1900), and the Jacquemart-André Museum (1913), the Cognac-Jay Museum (1929), and the Nissim de Camondo Museum (1936) in Paris.<sup>5</sup>

*In Art collecting in the United States of America, An Outline of a History*, W.G.

Constable argues that these collectors were often inspired by the same motives that determine why, when, and how he/she sets to work: pure greed and pride in possession; love for and interest in the objects collected; patronage and encouragement of the arts; and a wish to instruct and benefit the public.<sup>6</sup> In *A Rationale for Collecting*, G. Thomas Tanselle argues that four main aspects of collecting include the desire for the creation of order, a fascination with chance, curiosity about the past, and a desire for understanding.<sup>7</sup> Similar to a select group of contemporary collectors who conceived that their collection should ultimately be accessible for public view, such as Isabella Stewart Gardner in Boston, Henry Walters in Baltimore, and J.G. Johnson in Philadelphia, the Blumenthals demonstrated a passion for and interest in their collection, while focused on patronage and encouragement of the arts, as well as a wish to instruct and benefit the public.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information about the development of private museums into public spaces and these shifting patterns of collecting, see Georgina S. Walker, *The Private Collector's Museum: Public Good Versus Private Gain* (London: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see *Jacquemart-André Museum* (Paris: Jacquemart-André Museum, 2015) and Sylvie Legrand-Rossi, Chloe Demey, David Wharry, *The Nissim Camondo Museum* (Paris: Les Arts Décoratifs, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Constable, p I.

<sup>7</sup> G. Thomas Tanselle, "A Rationale of Collecting," *Studies in Bibliography*, vol. 51 (1998), p. 14.



It was also during this period that George Blumenthal experienced tremendous financial and professional success as a banker and became actively involved with the boards of both Mount Sinai Hospital and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, culminating with his presidency of the former in 1911 and the latter in 1934.

Blumenthal's initial activity on the Museum's board during the first decade of the twentieth century coincided with its development as more established and international institution, as well as the creation of a new Decorative Arts Wing. Although his term as chairman of the Finance Committee and his accession as president of the Museum coincided with the economic downturn following the Great Depression, Blumenthal's leadership experience and savvy business skills successfully maintained the institution's financial conditions during his tenure. Nonetheless, the Museum, like many other organizations during this period, experienced a decline in visitor attendance, reduced financial support from the city, fewer acquisitions, and decreased salaries.

This was also the period of development of American cultural philanthropy and the founding of important American cultural institutions, including the Hispanic Society (1904), the Morgan Library (1924), the Museum of Modern Art (1929), and the Whitney Museum of Art (1930) by philanthropists and patrons committed to advancing and diffusing knowledge through the arts, such as J.P. Morgan, Archer Huntington, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, to name a few. Finally, it was a moment of interest in a plethora of period styles of interior decoration, of obtainability and accessibility to important art collections and period architectural elements on the art market, and the emergence of agents, advisors and dealers supplying art to wealthy collectors.<sup>8</sup>

Over the course of the couple's thirty-two year marriage, George and Florence Blumenthal commissioned and decorated two mansions in New York City, the first a beaux-arts style house in 1902, followed by a fifteenth-century Florentine palazzo

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<sup>8</sup> Shelley M. Bennett, *The Art of Wealth: The Huntingtons in the Gilded Age* (Pasadena, California: The Huntington Library Press, 2013), pp. xiv, xv.

between 1911-1919 (both non extant); a Victorian-style shingle house in the Adirondack mountains of Upstate New York between 1899-1900, known as Knollwood Club; a nineteenth-century neo-Greek style chateau in the sixteenth district of Paris in 1919; and the Château de Malbosc in the French Riviera near Grasse in 1925. They worked closely with a group of architects, designers, decorators, and dealers to build and showcase their collection of paintings, sculpture, textiles, and decorative arts, ranging from the Medieval and early Italian Renaissance periods, to French eighteenth-century and contemporary design.

In order to address these questions and themes, the thesis will be organized into three parts. Part 1 will detail an in-depth biography of George Blumenthal and Florence Meyer in order to establish how their different family origins helped shape their combined motivation to collect, their philanthropic activities, and their Jewish identity. I will argue that, while they created a collecting partnership in marriage, collecting may have served a different purpose for them individually. For George, who came from a Jewish, merchant class family of Frankfurt, Germany, collecting provided a sense of identity and represented a method of assimilation and acceptance in New York during this period. For Florence, conversely, collecting was a natural extension of her privileged family upbringing and familiarity with artistic circles, however it served as a catalyst for her philanthropic endeavors, primarily in France.

Part 1 will also reveal George and Florence Blumenthal's combined and individual philanthropic activities in order to determine their surviving legacy today. George was strongly committed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, both for which he served as president; Florence remained dedicated to the creation of her *Franco-American Florence Blumenthal Foundation*, beginning in 1919, which awarded a two-year grant (*Prix Blumenthal*) to young French artists between 1919-1954, strengthening the connections between the United States and France through the arts. Together, they both supported the Necker Children's Hospital and American Hospital in Paris. George and Florence were both awarded the Legion of Honor by the French government in recognition for their philanthropic contributions.

In order to provide a framework for their family origins, social circles, Jewish identity, philanthropy, and collecting motivations, I will rely on primary source material in both America and Europe, including Meyer family records (many of which unpublished), conserved at the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley and at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; representations of Florence through portraiture, including two self-portraits by Giovanni Boldini commissioned by Florence Blumenthal, one in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the other in the collection of the musée d'Orsay (on deposit to the French Embassy in Vienna); a marble portrait bust of Florence by close friend and artist, Paul Landowski, conserved at the Avery Library at Columbia University, and the plaster model in the collection of the Musée des Années 30 in Paris; unpublished Blumenthal family records from the Frankfurt City Archives; Blumenthal correspondence and director files from the Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives (many of which unpublished); unpublished correspondence and photographs conserved in the Levy Library at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York; donation and object files conserved in the Department of Objets d'art, Moyen Âge, and Arts Graphiques at the Louvre Museum; records of charitable donations to the Necker Children's Hospital in Paris, the American Hospital of Paris, the Sorbonne, and Ecole du Louvre; and a scrapbook gathering photographs, obituaries and press clippings, conserved in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Parts 2A and 2B will analyze the documentation related to the architecture, furnishings, and inventories of the Blumenthal houses in both New York and in France in order to demonstrate their public function, establish the Blumenthal's collecting activity and social circles in America and abroad, determine the architects, designers, and dealers involved in the projects, and support Florence's significant role and direct involvement in acquiring works for the collection and assisting with the orchestration and designing of the houses.

Part 2A will analyze the Blumenthal's New York residences, including the first

Manhattan home that George and Florence built as a newly married couple, designed by Hunt & Hunt; their Great Camp of Knollwood Club in the Adirondacks, designed by William L. Coulter and commissioned as a summer retreat with five other Jewish families; and their principal residence on Park Avenue, designed by Trowbridge & Livingston, that showcased a large majority of the art collection and that would ultimately be bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I will argue that George and Florence Blumenthal commissioned and decorated this final residence with the public in mind as an extension of the Museum. I will draw upon many unpublished resources and documentation for the Park Avenue residence, including curatorial records conserved in the European Sculpture and Decorative Arts and Medieval Departments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; original photographs of the construction conserved at the New York Public Library; original interior photographs conserved at the New York Historical Society and the Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; dealer correspondence from the Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia, the Getty Research Center in Los Angeles, and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.; and photographs and published literature related to the Blumenthal's relationship with their chief decorator, Armand-Albert Rateau (1882-1938).

Part 2B will analyze the Blumenthal houses in France, in both Paris and Grasse, including surviving records of the interiors and collections, in order to understand how the couple used these homes abroad, to identify their social circles overseas, and to analyze the role of their collecting partnership and collaboration in Europe in comparison to their partnership in America. Due to the limited surviving photographic documentation of the Blumenthal's interiors in France, I will utilize records related to the construction and use of the Blumenthal's *Salle Gothique*, or Gothic room, in Paris in order to argue that it was designed and constructed as a public space for meetings and concerts, as well as provided a means for Florence Blumenthal to create a philanthropic identity. I will also argue that Florence played a direct role in the majority of architectural and decorating decisions in France, an unusual occurrence for a woman during this period. Additionally, this chapter will argue that the final dissemination of the Blumenthal's French eighteenth-century

works of art at the 1932 Paris auction, following Florence's death, was part of the Blumenthal's ultimate goal of using the collection for public and social engagement.

Archival documentation related to the Blumenthal's Parisian residence include unpublished building permits, architectural plans, and auction records conserved at the Archives de Paris; unpublished architectural information conserved at the Commission du Vieux Paris; notary records from les Archives Nationales; and photographs from the Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle. Archival documentation related to the Blumenthal's residence in Grasse includes unpublished documents from the Communal Archives of Grasse and newspaper articles from the Villa Saint-Hilaire Grasse Library.

Part 3 of this thesis will focus primarily on the Blumenthal bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1941, comprising the house and collection (pre-1720), the ultimate demolition of the property, and the physical transfer of the collection to the Museum in order to establish the Blumenthal's surviving legacy today. I will also analyze four specific case studies of the collection, including the Spanish Patio from Vélez-Blanco, two examples of French eighteenth-century royal furniture, and a selection of European ceramics, in order to determine their collecting interests, influences, and how the collection was assembled with the Museum in mind. I will also analyze the six-volume illustrated catalogue of the Blumenthal collection, published between 1926-1930, as another means of public engagement. Finally, I will argue that the role of George Blumenthal's second wife, Mary Ann Payne Blumenthal (1889-1973), sustained the Blumenthal legacy as steward of the collection following its bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1941.

Primary sources include final Wills and Testaments and correspondence related to the Blumenthal Bequest in the Museum Archives and Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Cloisters in New York; collection files and photographs conserved in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; select *Bulletins of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, and the six-volume *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal* and 1943

exhibition catalogue *Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal: a special exhibition*, conserved at the Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Several scholars have already chronicled aspects of the Blumenthal's collection and philanthropy, however these publications have not fully explored the overall motivations of George and Florence Blumenthal, their collaboration and collecting partnership, or the comprehensive legacy of the Blumenthal collection within a larger context of collecting history.<sup>9</sup> There has also not yet been a complete survey and analysis of all of the Blumenthal's residences on both sides of the Atlantic. This thesis will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on collecting in America, beginning in the Gilded Age until the early years of World War II, through a presentation of archival research and unpublished documentation, as well as a broader context for this important episode in collecting history.

The emergence of the history of collecting as a part of art history, as exemplified through the launch of the *Journal of the History of Collections* in 1989, as well as key publications on the relationship between collectors and museums, has helped shape our understanding of collecting history. To date, a number of key works have been published on collectors and collecting, however, this growing discipline has been primarily focused on leading male industrial, financial, and art collecting personalities, such as J.P. Morgan, William and Cornelius Vanderbilt, Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Mellon, Andrew Carnegie, Henry E. Huntington, and Robert Lehman, as well as a select number of important female

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<sup>9</sup> See Olga Raggio, "The Velez Blanco Patio, An Italian Renaissance Monument from Spain," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (December 1964), pp. 141-176; Stella Rubinstein-Bloch, *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal*, 6 vols. (Paris: Albert Lévy, 1926-30); *Masterpieces in the collection of George Blumenthal: A Special Exhibition* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943); Augusta Patterson, "The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal," *Town & Country* (March 1, 1930), pp. 61-70; 108; Augusta Patterson, "Decoration: Furniture in the Blumenthal Collection," *International Studio* (November 1930), pp. 44-49; Franck Olivier-Vial and François Rateau, *Armand Albert Rateau: un baroque chez les modernes* (Paris: Les Editions de l'Amateur, 1992); and Hans Nadelhoffer, *Cartier*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007).

collectors and patrons, including Isabella Stewart Gardner and Peggy Guggenheim, rather than on pairs.<sup>10</sup>

Several relevant publications about art collecting in America and Europe also help provide a framework of New York society and the generation of collectors and financiers that served as models for the Blumenthals and further situate them within the context of collecting, including René Brimo's *The Evolution of Taste in American Collecting* (2016) that provides first-hand accounts of eighteenth and nineteenth-century patronage and art collecting in America; Pauline Prévost-Marcilhacy's *Les Rothschild: une dynastie de mécènes en France* (2016) that showcases the generosity of the Rothschild family towards French museums and situates them within the family tradition and cultural context; Michaël Vottero's *To Collect and Conquer: American Collections in the Gilded Age* (2013) that analyzes how art became the vehicle for changing representations of power and status among newly affluent businessmen and politicians; Shelley M. Bennett's *The Art of Wealth: The Huntingtons in the Gilded Age* (2008) that focuses on the family's public and private models of art collecting and philanthropy in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century America; and Aline B. Saarinen's *The Proud Possessors: The Lives, Times and Tastes of Some Adventurous American Art Collectors* (1958) that provides an overview of the private art collections of American benefactors, such as J.P. Morgan, Charles Lang Freer, Peggy Guggenheim, the Rockefeller family, Isabella Stewart Gardner, John G. Johnson, among others.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Although there are not many published resources on collecting couples, Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron's *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993) and Pat Kirkham's *Charles & Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995) address gender, creativity, and the complexities of artistic partnerships. The exhibition *Modern Couples, Art, Intimacy and the Avant-garde*, held at the Barbican Art Gallery in 2018, also explored the creative and personal relationships between modern artist couples across paintings, sculpture, photography, design, and literature.

<sup>11</sup> See René Brimo (translated and edited by Kenneth Haltman), *The Evolution of Taste in American Collecting* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2016); Pauline Prévost-Marcilhacy, *Les Rothschild, Une Dynastie de Mécènes en France*, vol. I (Paris: musée du Louvre, 2016); Michaël Vottero, "To Collect and Conquer: American Collections in the Gilded Age," *Transatlantica* [online], 1 | 2013, pp. 1-10; Shelley M. Bennett, *The Art of Wealth: The Huntingtons in the Gilded Age* (Pasadena, California: The Huntington Library Press, 2013); and Aline B. Saarinen, *The Proud Possessors: The Lives, Times and Tastes of Some Adventurous American Art Collectors* (New York: Random House, 1958).

Additional contemporary collecting comparisons are useful in understanding the Blumenthals. In *Collecting as Modernist Practice* (2012), Jeremy Braddock evaluates the model of private art collecting by examining The Phillips Gallery in Washington, D.C. and The Barnes Foundation outside Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup> In *Cultural Excursions, Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (1990), Neil Harris examines the new role of the American collector and the influx of European art collections, wealthy collectors, the multiplication of dealers, and the growth of the American art museum for which bankers and industrialists served on its boards, similar to George Blumenthal.<sup>13</sup>

A number of relevant publications on female collecting are instrumental in positioning Florence Blumenthal in the context of other female collectors. Inge Reist and Rosella Mamoli Zorzi's *Power Underestimates: American Women Art and Collectors* (2011) argues that during the age of the newly wealthy 'robber barons' and their substantial art acquisitions, women, like men, sustained a similar urge to collect art and a personal art collection served to educate and enlighten the public.<sup>14</sup> Women were also concerned with patronage, whether organizing art exhibitions or commissioning works of art and satisfied the urge to collect within the boundaries of the socio-economic conditions of their time. Dianne Sachko Macleod's *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (2008) analyzes the role of the female consumer of decorative arts, the motivations for collecting art and the liberating effect it had on the elite women, and the social and economic factors that effected female collectors during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Kathleen D. McCarthy's *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (1990) provides a context for Florence Blumenthal's activity by looking at other female

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<sup>12</sup> See Jeremy Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> See Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions, Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> See Inge Reist and Rosella Mamoli Zorzi (eds.), *Power Underestimates: American Women Art and Collectors* (New York: The Frick Collection, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> See Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted lives, enchanted objects: American women collectors and the making of culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008).



collectors and patrons, such as Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924), who served as a leading influence for the Blumenthals.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Simon J. Bronner's *Jews at Home: The Domestication of Identity* (2010) and Nicholas Mirzoeff's *Diaspora and Visual Culture* (2000) are useful in understanding the importance of building a home through collecting, Jewish identity, and mobility and assimilation in the context of the Blumenthal's homes.<sup>17</sup> George M. Goodwin's *A New Jewish Elite: Curators, Directors, and Benefactors of American Art Museums* (1998) is helpful in understanding the anti-Semitic climate in New York during this period and the framework behind George Blumenthal's Presidency at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Kathleen D. McCarthy (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> See Simon J. Bronner (ed.), "Jews at Home: The Domestication of Identity," *Jewish Cultural Studies*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2010); Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *Diaspora and Visual Culture, Representing Africans and Jews* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> See George M. Goodwin, "A New Jewish Elite: Curators, Directors, and Benefactors of American Art Museums," *Modern Judaism*, vol. 18, no. 1. (February, 1998), pp. 47-79.

## Part 1. Biography

In order to determine how their different family origins helped shape and influence the Blumenthal's collecting and philanthropic partnership and combined goals as a married couple, this chapter will trace, through a chronological narrative, George and Florence's family origins and early Jewish identity, strands of activity, and collecting and philanthropy, concluding in the early 1940s with the Blumenthal legacy to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. I will argue that for Florence, who came from a wealthy family and whose siblings became patrons of the arts and founders of modern art museums in America, collecting and philanthropy was a natural extension of her existing identity. By contrast, George came from a merchant class German family and may have used collecting to assimilate into New York society. An in-depth analysis of their family backgrounds, collecting motivations, and philanthropy through family papers, portraits, collection catalogues, and donations to institutions in both New York and in France will reveal a more thorough understanding and detailed biographical representation of the couple, setting the stage for the combined collection and houses described in Parts 2 and 3 of this thesis.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For existing biographical information on the Blumenthals, see obituaries "Mrs. Blumenthal, Art Patron, Dead," *New York Times* (September 22, 1930); "Mr. Blumenthal Cited by France for Charity Dies," *Herald Tribune* (September 22, 1930); "Geo. Blumenthal, Museum Head, Dies," *New York Times* (June 27, 1941); "George Blumenthal, 83, Dies; Head of Museum," Untitled Newspaper Article, Undated; "In Memoriam: George Blumenthal, 1858-1941," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 26, no. 7 (July 1941), pp. 146-147; press clippings "Blumenthal Head of Art Museum," *New York Times* (January 10, 1934); collection catalogues Stella Rubinstein-Bloch, *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal*, 6 vols. (Paris: Albert Lévy, 1926-30); *Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal: A Special Exhibition* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943); auction catalogues *Blumenthal Collection, Catalogue des objets d'arts et d'ameublement du XVIIIe siècle. Tableaux anciens, dessins - gravures. Sale, Dec. 1-2, 1932* (Paris. Galerie Georges Petit, 1932); *Catalogue des objets d'art et d'ameublement, tableaux, gravures, faïences, porcelaines d'Allemagne, porcelaines tendres françaises, porcelaines et matières dures de la Chine..., sièges et meubles... appartenant à M. George Blumenthal... : deuxième vente. Sale, April 5-6, 1933, Hotel Drouot, Paris*; "Catalogue de beaux livres anciens et modernes provenant de la bibliothèque de G. Blumenthal" (vente à Paris, 6-7 juin, 1933, Hotel Drouot). L. Giraud-Badin, 1933; and Francis Henry Taylor, "The Blumenthal Collection," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* vol. 36, no. 10 (October 1941), pp. 193, 195-198.

### The Meyer Family

Florence Meyer Blumenthal (1873-1930) was the third of eight children, and one of five girls, born in Los Angeles to Marc Eugene Meyer (1842-1925), known as Eugene, and Harriet Newmark (1851-1922).<sup>2</sup> (See Fig. 1) Following her family's relocation to San Francisco in 1884, Florence spent her adolescent years in a large home built by her father in an affluent neighborhood on Fort Street (present day Broadway Street).<sup>3</sup> Like the Meyers, many prominent families settled in this neighborhood in the late nineteenth century, including other members of the Newmark family on Florence's mother's side.<sup>4</sup>

Although not originally from a wealthy family, Eugene Meyer, became a highly successful and well-respected businessman in both California and New York during the nineteenth century. (See Fig. 2) Meyer was born in Strasbourg, France in 1842, the youngest of four children by his father's second wife.<sup>5</sup> Eugene and his siblings were raised in an observant Jewish household as his paternal grandfather, Jacob Meyer, was a former Grand Rabbi of Upper Alsace and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin of 1807, a Jewish council made up of seventy-one members that, at the request of Napoleon, formed

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<sup>2</sup> A Meyer family tree states that Florence Meyer was born in 1873, while other literature records that she was born in 1875 and was 55 years of age when she passed away in 1930. Irena Narell, *Our City, The Jews of San Francisco* (San Diego, California: Howell-North Books, 1981) p. 356; Siegel, Michele. "Florence Meyer Blumenthal, 1875-1930, *Jewish Women's Archive* (accessed July 9, 2016): <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/blumenthal-florence-meyer>.

<sup>3</sup> Records indicate that by 1869, Eugene Meyer owned a substantial plot of land measuring 120 x 330 feet on Fort Street (between Second and Third Street) and it is likely that Meyer was one of the earlier real estate investors in this San Francisco neighborhood. Since first emigrating to Los Angeles in 1861 and relocated to San Francisco in 1884, it is likely that Meyer may have invested in San Francisco real estate before his transfer. Harris Newmark, *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913, containing the Reminiscences of Harris Newmark* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1916), p. 175; "Memories of Building Homes 50 Years Ago," *Los Angeles Herald*, Volume 33, Number 85, (December 25, 1910); California Digital Newspaper Collection <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=LAH19101225.2.193.9> (accessed February 6, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> See more information on the Newmark family later in this chapter. Other prominent residents who constructed houses near Eugene Meyer Sr. and his family were Major Ben C. Truman, Clem Goodwin, Herman W. Hellman, Captain C.E. Thom, W.H. Perry, Judge Hubbell, Major Toberman, Henry Hazard, Tom Temple, and Harriet Newmark's cousin, Harris Newmark. California Digital Newspaper Collection <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=LAH19101225.2.193.9> (accessed February 6, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Although his parents were deeply religious, Eugene Meyer was born into an environment of much greater religious and political freedom than his Eastern European or German-Jewish contemporaries. In 1791, full citizenship rights were granted to the French Jews, thus France became the first European state to emancipate all the Jews within its borders. Narell, p. 407.

a legislative concordat for French Judaism.<sup>6</sup> (See Fig. 3) In 1865, Eugene's older sister, Ernestine Meyer Kahn (1840-1908), married Zadig Zadoc Kahn (1839-1905), Chief Rabbi of France, as well as Paris, who was also considered a close confidant of the French branch of the Rothschild family.<sup>7</sup> In 1890, Zadoc Kahn officiated the marriage of French Jewish artillery officer, Alfred, and Lucie Dreyfus and was instrumental in defending the captain during the tumultuous Dreyfus Affair and in combating anti-Semitism in France.<sup>8</sup>

Eugene was a bright student, particularly gifted in mathematics and music, and received a religious and secular education.<sup>9</sup> Following his father's premature death in 1850, Eugene left school at the age of fourteen to help support his family; his sisters Ernestine and Amélie worked as sales girls, his brother Constant as a blacksmith.<sup>10</sup> He was initially hired by the Blum brothers to work in their store "L. et N. Blum" in Alsace, with a branch in Mississippi, whereby Eugene Meyer was given the opportunity to leave for the United States in 1859.<sup>11</sup> During this period in France, the press portrayed the American west as the "land of romance" and Eugene Meyer was among those captivated by the talk of a new land.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to a Grand Rabbi, Jacob Meyer was also an author of an ode to Emperor Napoleon and was awarded the Legion of Honor. Narell, p. 346; "Sanhedrin, French," *Jewish Virtual Library, A Project of AIC*, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/sanhedrin-french>.

<sup>7</sup> Zadig Zadoc-Kahn's mother was the daughter of Rabbi Isaac Weyl de Wintzheim (also spelled Weill), and the granddaughter of the Grand Rabbi Jacob Meyer. Thus Zadoc Kahn and his wife, Ernestine, shared a relative in common. Some literature incorrectly states that Ernestine Meyer married Léon Zadoc Kahn (1870-1943), instead of Zadig Zadoc-Kahn, who was her son and who perished during World War II. Jean-Pierre Poussou and Isabelle Robin-Romero, *Histoire des familles, de la démographie et des comportements: en hommage à Jean-Pierre Bardet* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2007), pp. 520-521; Narell, p. 346; "Kahn, Zadoc," *Jewish Virtual Library, A Project of AICE*, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/kahn-zadoc>.

<sup>8</sup> Narell, p. 282.

<sup>9</sup> Eugene Meyer was educated at the Gymnase Jean-Sturm, a private Protestant school in Strasbourg, the École normale supérieure, and Hebrew religious school. Narell, p. 346; Eva Fran Kahn ed., *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849-1880* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2002), p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Poussou and Robin-Romero, p. 522.

<sup>11</sup> Katharine Graham, *Personal History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), p. 4; Poussou and Robin-Romero, p. 522.

<sup>12</sup> Eva Fran Kahn ed., *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849-1880* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2002), p. 138.

In Paris, on the way to America, Eugene was introduced by his employer, Nathan Blum, to Alexandre Lazard of Lazard Frères, the future international banking firm who were then importers of French, Swiss, and German commodities, such as tea, sugar, grain, textiles, and other consumer goods. He subsequently provided Eugene Meyer with a letter of introduction to Alexander Weill of Lazard Frères in San Francisco, whom Eugene had previously met in France.<sup>13</sup> Upon his arrival in San Francisco, Alexander Weill introduced Eugene to Simon Lazard, a partner of Lazard Frères, who found him a job at the auction house Smiley, Yerkes & Voizin so that he could learn English.<sup>14</sup>

In 1861, at the age of twenty, Eugene moved to Los Angeles where he was hired as a clerk and bookkeeper in the store of Solomon Lazard.<sup>15</sup> (See Fig 4a) Eugene Meyer remained in Los Angeles, eventually becoming co-partner of the company with Weill and Lazard, and ultimately acquiring the store in its entirety around 1873, in partnership with his brother Constant, at which time it was re-named “The City of Paris.”<sup>16</sup> (See Fig. 4b) Eugene was extremely well respected and quickly developed a reliable and trustworthy reputation in Los Angeles that soon local citizens entrusted their money with him for safekeeping, foreshadowing his future career as a banker.<sup>17</sup> He was also responsible for establishing the city’s water system, involved in real estate and mining investments, and

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<sup>13</sup> Kahn, pp. 139-140.

<sup>14</sup> During this period, San Francisco was a relatively new town with a population of 50,000-60,000 inhabitants. Besides the waterfront, the majority of the city was made up of sand hills. Kahn, p. 140.

<sup>15</sup> During this early period, Eugene Meyer lived in a room behind the shop and slept on the counter armed with a handgun to protect Lazard’s merchandise. Solomon and Simon Lazard were cousins. Some references state that Eugene Meyer and Solomon Lazard were also cousins. Other sources confirm that Solomon Lazard married Eugene Meyer’s future sister-in-law, Caroline Newmark (1845-1920). “Eugene Meyer: Los Angeles Merchant & Civic Investor,” *Jewish Museum of the American West* (online) (accessed December 19, 2017), [www.jmaw.org/meyer-jewish-los-angeles](http://www.jmaw.org/meyer-jewish-los-angeles); [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon\\_Lazard#Personal\\_life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_Lazard#Personal_life); Narell, p. 346; Graham, p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> Narell, p. 346; Graham, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> It became common during this period and region for customers to leave their gold and silver with Jewish merchants for safekeeping. “Solomon Lazard: Major Jewish Pioneer of Early Los Angeles’ Infrastructure,” *Jewish Museum of the American West* (online) (accessed December 19, 2017), [www.jmaw.org/lazard-jewish-los-angeles](http://www.jmaw.org/lazard-jewish-los-angeles); Narell, p. 346.

doubled as the French consular agent, serving as a political and economic player on an international level.<sup>18</sup>

Along with Solomon Lazard, Harris Newmark, and Leon Loeb, Eugene Meyer was a member of the Vigilance Committee, a group formed of private citizens to administer law and order independent of existing governmental structures, as well as a pioneer member of the Los Angeles Social Club, the first of its kind in the city.<sup>19</sup> When these social organizations were first founded in the late 1860s, they were created with an emphasis on tolerance, sympathy, and respect for their individual members.<sup>20</sup> It was in the late nineteenth century that they subsequently became a retreat for Los Angeles Jews from the social exclusion and bigotry that developed with the arrival of a large Protestant population from the Midwest which altered Los Angeles' population from a mixture of foreign and ethnic groups into one dominant Protestant majority.<sup>21</sup>

In November 1867, Eugene Meyer married sixteen-year-old Harriet Newmark (1851-1922), the youngest, and reportedly prettiest, daughter of Joseph Newmark (1799-1881) and Rosa Levy's (1808-1875) six children, at the Bella Union Hotel in Los Angeles.<sup>22</sup> (See Fig. 5) As Rabbi of Los Angeles, Joseph Newmark personally officiated the wedding.<sup>23</sup> Guests included the governor and the French consul, whose duties Eugene Meyer would later assume.<sup>24</sup> The Newmarks were one of the most prominent Jewish families in Los Angeles during this period and married into other prominent Jewish families in the city, underlining Eugene Meyer's rapidly advancing social position at the

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<sup>18</sup> Graham, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*; Newmark, *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913, containing the Reminiscences of Harris Newmark* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1916), p. 176.

<sup>20</sup> Newmark, p. 176.

<sup>21</sup> [http://home.earthlink.net/~nholdeneditor/jews\\_of\\_los\\_angeles.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~nholdeneditor/jews_of_los_angeles.htm).

<sup>22</sup> Narell, p. 346.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Newmark officiated the wedding ceremonies of all of his children. Narell, p. 346; "Joseph Newmark: Early Los Angeles Pioneer, Uncle of Harris Newmark, Unofficial Rabbi of Early Los Angeles," *Jewish Museum of the American West*, <http://www.jmaw.org/joseph-newmark-early-los-angeles-pioneer-uncle-of-harris-newmark-unofficial-rabbi-of-early-los-angeles/> (accessed: July 19, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Narell, 347.

time.<sup>25</sup> (Figure 6 illustrates a photo of the Newmark family) Although not all Jewish immigrants that arrived in California during the mid-nineteenth century in search of gold and other opportunities found success, upward social mobility was certainly common during this period and many fortunes were made in the mines, clothing and dry goods businesses, banking, and gold. The couple was quickly integrated in elite Jewish society, surrounded by their cousins the Newmarks, Loebs, and Kremers.<sup>26</sup>

Eugene and Harriet Meyer had eight children, five girls and three boys, which compromised Harriet's energetic personality and health towards the latter part of her life.<sup>27</sup> (See Fig. 7) In 1883, Eugene Meyer was offered and accepted the position of head of the San Francisco branch of the London, Paris, and American bank, Lazard Frères, relocating his family from Los Angeles in 1884, where they remained until 1895 when Eugene was promoted to senior partner of Lazard Frères in New York.<sup>28</sup> Although we have no concrete evidence, it seems very likely that Florence Meyer was introduced to George Blumenthal by her father, as they were colleagues in the same office.

Despite long-standing religious traditions and rabbinical ancestry, Jewish identity for Jewish families in San Francisco during this period was perhaps more cultural than practicing and often assimilated families, like the Meyers, did not observe Judaism,

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<sup>25</sup> Harriet Newmark's sisters Matilda and Caroline Newmark married Maurice Kremer and Solomon Lazard respectively and the names of the clan's companies are prominent in Los Angeles' businesses: M.A. Newmark & Company; Solomon Lazard & Company; Rich Newmark & Company; Kremer & Company; Kaspere Cohn & Company; Kaspere Cohn Commercial and Savings Bank; and Brownstein, Newmark & Louis. Harriet's brother, Meyer J. Newmark, was elected Los Angeles City Attorney in 1862, the first Jew to hold the position. Harriet and Fred Rochlin, *Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000), pp. 126-127; Narell, pp. 346, 348.

<sup>26</sup> Narell, p. 348; Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, BANC MSS 2010/604, Carton 1:3 (1883), Carton 1:4 (1884) and Carton 1:5 (1885), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; "Eugene Meyer: Los Angeles Merchant & Civic Investor," *Jewish Museum of the American West* (online) (accessed December 19, 2017), [www.jmaw.org/meyer-jewish-los-angeles](http://www.jmaw.org/meyer-jewish-los-angeles).

<sup>27</sup> In an effort to escape the San Francisco weather and improve Harriet's ailing health, the Meyer family briefly moved east across the Bay to Alameda, but quickly returned to San Francisco as it was more convenient for Eugene Meyer's work. Narell, pp. 148, 347; Margaret Liebman Berger, *Aline Meyer Liebman, Pioneer Collector and Artist* (Canandaigua, N.Y.: W.F. Humphrey Press, 1982), p. 43; Graham, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Narell, p. 148; Berger, p. 43; Graham, p. 6.

opting for a more secular life.<sup>29</sup> This is consistent with the separation between cultural and religious practices that appears to have become more common during this period. It also became increasingly common for younger generations to turn away from their family's religious and cultural identity, often times becoming anti-Semitic, converting to other religions, such as Catholicism, Unitarianism, or Christian Scientist (as did Florence's eldest sister, Rosalie Meyer), changing their name, and marrying non-Jewish spouses.<sup>30</sup> Many European Jewish immigrants also wished to ignore their European origins, as well as their religious heritage, and become fully Americanized.<sup>31</sup> The grandchildren and great-grandchildren of some of these early pioneering families, perhaps as a result of the Holocaust or the emergence of the state of Israel, often later returned to their Jewish identity and re-discovered the suppressed long lost traditions of their ancestors.<sup>32</sup>

Although not a religiously observant family, all of the Meyer children were raised amongst particular rituals and societal traditions typical of affluent Jewish families in the nineteenth century. They studied at university, learned foreign languages (often by the teachers favored by the "best" Jewish families), attended dances and parties with other Jews of their fellow social class, and traveled extensively to Europe. Most of these traditions were also passed on to their children and extended families.<sup>33</sup> Within San Francisco Jewish society, the Meyers were expected to marry into members of other "first" Jewish families and remain closely connected to these intimate circles, whether during intimate family settings or during social functions at the symphony, opera, or charity balls.<sup>34</sup> The motivations for keeping within these parallel social spheres may have been a form of preserving culture and tradition in response to the anti-Semitism of the period. It was during the late nineteenth century that American Jews were confronted with the beginnings of social and political anti-Semitism, a drastic departure from the

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<sup>29</sup> Narell, pp. 379, 380.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Narell, p. 380.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>34</sup> Narell, pp. 360, 366, 379.



eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when their prosperous position was more secure.<sup>35</sup>

### The Newmark Family

Similar to her father, Florence's mother, Harriet Newmark, was raised in a religious home. Her father, Joseph Newmark, an Orthodox Jew originally from Ritterberg-Neumark, Prussia (today Poland), was a trained ritual slaughterer and came to the United States with his first wife and two children in 1821, settling in New York between 1823 and 1824.<sup>36</sup> In 1825, he co-founded the B'nai Jeshurun synagogue in Manhattan (the first Ashkenazic Congregation), became a Mason in 1831, and a U.S. Citizen in 1834.<sup>37</sup> In 1835, he married Englishwoman Rosa Levy (1808-1875) in New York following the death of his first wife.<sup>38</sup> In 1840, Joseph, Rosa, and their six children moved to Saint-Louis, Missouri where Joseph served as the president of a synagogue until 1845.<sup>39</sup> In 1852, the Newmark family moved to California, first stopping in San Francisco where Joseph had the honor of officiating the first Jewish wedding in the state, and subsequently settling in Los Angeles in 1853 where he went into business with his nephews at their wholesale and retail dry good business known as Newmark, Kremer & Co.<sup>40</sup>

Religious tradition continued to play an important role for the Newmark family in Los Angeles. Joseph established and served as founding president of the Congregation B'nai

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<sup>35</sup> John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 43, no. 4 (March 1957), p. 562.

<sup>36</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Newmark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Newmark); "Joseph Newmark: Early Los Angeles Pioneer, Uncle of Harris Newmark, Unofficial Rabbi of Early Los Angeles," *Jewish Museum of the American West*, <http://www.jmaw.org/joseph-newmark-early-los-angeles-pioneer-uncle-of-harris-newmark-unofficial-rabbi-of-early-los-angeles/> (accessed: July 19, 2016); Harriet and Fred Rochlin, *Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000), p. 126.

<sup>37</sup> "Joseph Newmark: Early Los Angeles Pioneer, Uncle of Harris Newmark, Unofficial Rabbi of Early Los Angeles."

<sup>38</sup> "Rosa Newmark: Matriarch of the Los Angeles Newmark Family and Founder of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society," *Jewish Museum of the American West*, <http://www.jmaw.org/rosa-newmark-jewish-los-angeles/> (accessed: July 13, 2016).

<sup>39</sup> Rochlin, p. 126; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Newmark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Newmark).

<sup>40</sup> "Joseph Newmark: Early Los Angeles Pioneer, Uncle of Harris Newmark, Unofficial Rabbi of Early Los Angeles."

B'rith (the oldest Orthodox synagogue in the city), founded the Hebrew Benevolent Society (the first chartered charity organization in Los Angeles), and became the lay Rabbi of Los Angeles, conducting informal Sabbath services.<sup>41</sup> Relatives referred to Joseph as “the patriarch of the Los Angeles Jewish community.”<sup>42</sup> With his uncompromising orthodox beliefs, including keeping a kosher kitchen, one can imagine the strict, religious household in which Harriet Newmark grew up and would have incorporated in her home with her own children, including Florence. Like Joseph, Rosa Newmark also dedicated time and energy to different Jewish causes. In January 1878, she became a founder of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society in Los Angeles, known today as Jewish Family Services, which focused on helping charities for women and children of the Hebrew faith.<sup>43</sup> Family records describe Rosa as “a woman who had few peers among either Jews or Christians, in sweetness of disposition and in all that is calculated to make [sic] a dutiful, affectionate wife, and a good true mother in Israel.”<sup>44</sup> Rosa no doubt served as a philanthropic role model for Florence and her siblings.

In Joseph Newmark's obituary, praise was given to the notable character of his family and his daughters' successful unions, referencing Harriet's marriage to Eugene Meyer:

He raised a large and interesting family. His daughters were accomplished citizens, including Mr. Eugene Meyer and Mr. M. Kremer.<sup>45</sup>

Harriet's childhood exposure to strong family values and parental emphasis on becoming a good citizen in the community no doubt influenced her choice of partner and the shaped the way she would raise her family.

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<sup>41</sup> In addition to his religious affiliations and positions, Joseph Newmark was also an officer of Los Angeles' first Masonic lodge.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newmark\\_family\\_of\\_Southern\\_California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newmark_family_of_Southern_California);  
<https://www.geni.com/people/Joseph-Newmark/6000000007330463220>; “Joseph Newmark: Early Los Angeles Pioneer, Uncle of Harris Newmark, Unofficial Rabbi of Early Los Angeles,” *Jewish Museum of the American West*, <http://www.jmaw.org/joseph-newmark-early-los-angeles-pioneer-uncle-of-harris-newmark-unofficial-rabbi-of-early-los-angeles/> (accessed: July 19, 2016).

<sup>42</sup> Rochlin, p. 128.

<sup>43</sup> “Rosa Newmark: Matriarch of the Los Angeles Newmark Family and Founder of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society.”

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> “The Death of Rabbi Newmark, *The Los Angeles Herald*, Volume 16, Number 53 (October 20, 1881).

However, Florence Blumenthal's niece, Katharine Graham, portrays a less complimentary and rather unaffectionate image of her grandfather, Eugene Meyer, in her memoirs:

[He] was very strict and not particularly loving...[t]here couldn't have been much parental love for all those children, with the father ambitious and driven and no real mother.<sup>46</sup>

Florence's exposure to an ambitious father and a charitable and religious mother likely influenced Florence to make her mark through philanthropic contributions in her adult life and seek the respect of her community.

### Meyer Siblings

Like Florence, many of the Meyer siblings were high-achieving individuals who valued philanthropy and the arts and married into other prominent families. They also had strong feelings about service, responsibility, assimilation, social class religion, Zionism (despite their non-Jewish identity), art, and education. Two of Florence's older siblings in particular, Rosalie and Elise Meyer, remained in San Francisco, married wealthy brothers, and were involved with several local philanthropic charities of their own.

Rosalie "Ro" Meyer (1869-1956), the eldest Meyer child, was particularly bright and enjoyed reading poetry, playing the piano, painting, and writing compositions in both French and English.<sup>47</sup> (See Fig. 8) As a result of her mother's poor health, Rosalie left school to help raise her younger siblings and served as an important role model and caretaker in the Meyer family.<sup>48</sup> As a young woman, despite her primary role as caregiver in the Meyer household, Rosalie was socially well-positioned and enjoyed an active social life filled with balls, receptions at clubs, and Christmas parties (common celebrations among wealthy San Francisco Jews), and even acquired her own calling

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<sup>46</sup> Graham, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Narell, p. 348.

<sup>48</sup> In 1887, Rosalie Meyer travelled with her mother to Europe in search of doctors and stayed with her Uncle Zadoc and Aunt Ernestine Kahn while in Paris, but unfortunately her mother's health remained unchanged. Graham, p. 5; Narell, p. 349.

card, a sign of upper class emergence, as a means of meeting male suitors. She also had several men competing for her hand in marriage, in accordance with Eugene Meyer's wish that his daughters all marry well.<sup>49</sup> As a maternal figure and well-placed in society, Florence likely looked to Rosalie as a role model.

In November 1892, Rosalie Meyer married Sigmund Stern (1857-1928), president of Levi Strauss and Co. and nephew of the founder, Levi Strauss, whom she met in Paris.<sup>50</sup> Rosalie made several important contributions as a civic and social leader of San Francisco and likely served as a philanthropic role model for Florence. During World War I, she became the first woman associate field director for military relief in the West, worked with the Red Cross at Camp Fremont Base Hospital, helped furnish troops with supplies, and collected money. She also served on the Garden Committee of the San Francisco Park and Recreation Department in 1917, formed the Garden Hospital Committee for the United States Veterans Hospital in 1918, and was appointed the president of the San Francisco Playground Commission in 1919.<sup>51</sup> She also purchased land that was scheduled for urban development and donated it to the city of San Francisco in 1931 for the establishment of Sigmund Stern Grove as a memorial to her husband, while forming a committee to underwrite free summer concerts in the Grove.<sup>52</sup> Rosalie's interest in and patronage for music remained throughout her life and she organized the San Francisco Junior Symphony and founded the San Francisco Opera Association.<sup>53</sup> This was a quality she shared with her sister Florence who later commissioned an organ for concerts in her Paris home. (See Part 2B for more on the

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<sup>49</sup> Narell, pp. 351-352, 360.

<sup>50</sup> Levi Strauss arrived in San Francisco at the height of the Gold Rush with a heavy denim material to originally sell to miners for use as tents, however, it made an ideal material for trousers and soon became known around the world. He founded the firm Levi Strauss and Co. in 1850 and made a fortune. Since Strauss was unmarried at the time of his death in 1902, his relatives the Sterns managed the business and inherited the company. Rosalie Meyer Stern papers and photographs, 1842-1977, Magnes Museum, University of California, Berkley Bancroft Library; Graham, pp. 6-7.

<sup>51</sup> Biographical Information from Finding Aid to the Rosalie Meyer Stern papers, 1867-1996, BANC MSS 2010/604, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.

<sup>52</sup> "American Jerusalem, Jews and the Making of San Francisco"

<http://www.americanjerusalem.com/characters/the-philanthropists/33> (accessed: July 19, 2016).

<sup>53</sup> Rosalie Meyer Stern papers and photographs, 1842-1977, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Blumenthal's homes in France)

Rosalie Meyer Stern also held numerous board positions, including Fatherless Children of France Society (for which she received the Legion of Honor in 1938), Associated Jewish Charities, Pioneer Kindergarten Society and Children's Agency, Community Chest, and the Women's Board of the San Francisco Museum of Art.<sup>54</sup> She also funded the construction of Stern Hall, a female residence hall at the University of California, Berkeley, for which she commissioned a mural of her grandchildren entitled "Still Life and Blossoming Almond Trees," from the Mexican painter, and close friend, Diego Rivera (Fig. 11); took an active interest in forty-eight scholarships that were established at the University by Levi Strauss and Co.; and served on the Entertainment Committee for the World's Fair held on Treasure Island in San Francisco between 1939-1940. Finally, she served on the War Relief Fund and the National Recreation Association, as well as an honorary member of the California Recreation Society.<sup>55</sup>

Rosalie and Sigmund Stern had one child, Elise Stern Haas (1893-1990), nicknamed "Bab" or "Babie," who became an early collector of modern art and was instrumental in the formation of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.<sup>56</sup> (Fig. 9 illustrates a photo of Sigmund, Rosalie, and Elise Stern) Although Elise's birth was widely celebrated by the Strauss, Stern, and Meyer families, Rosalie subsequently suffered from a deep postpartum depression that lasted for many years, turning to Christian Science to help cure her of her symptoms.<sup>57</sup> In 1914, Elise Stern married Walter A. Haas, president of Levi Strauss and Co., and the couple had three children: Walter A. Haas, Jr., Peter, and

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<sup>54</sup> Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, BANC MSS 2010/604, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 5, folder 19; Rosalie Meyer Stern papers and photographs, 1842-1977, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>55</sup> Rosalie Meyer Stern papers and photographs, 1842-1977, The Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, University of California, Berkeley, <https://magnes.berkeley.edu/digital-programs/dusty-archives/rosalie-meyer-stern-papers-and-photographs-1842-1977>.

<sup>56</sup> "American Jerusalem, Jews and the Making of San Francisco" <http://www.americanjerusalem.com/characters/the-philanthropists/33> (accessed: July 19, 2016); Narell, p. 357.

<sup>57</sup> Rosalie Meyer Stern remained a Christian Scientist the rest of her life. Narell, p. 351.

Rhoda.<sup>58</sup> According to family records, “[t]he Haases were eminently ‘suitable’ and the match pleased both families, as well as San Francisco Jewish society.”<sup>59</sup> In honor of their wedding, George and Florence Blumenthal sent the couple a suite of furniture upholstered in needlepoint in the style of a set conserved at the Palace of Fontainebleau outside of Paris.<sup>60</sup> Florence Blumenthal also supervised the order of the handmade bed linen that Rosalie Meyer Stern ordered for her daughter’s trousseau, illustrating the couple’s interest in antique furniture.<sup>61</sup>

As a result of Elise’s direct exposure to her mother’s interest in the arts and support of women’s education and leadership, not to mention her aunt Florence’s artistic patronage and collecting, it is not surprising that Elise became an active philanthropist and valuable patron of the arts in her own right, immersing herself in an important circle of collectors and philanthropists. She was an avid collector of modern paintings and amassed an important collection of works by Derain, Monet, Braque, Picasso, and Matisse, whom she knew personally.<sup>62</sup> The collection comprised more than thirty works from the early twentieth century and was considered one of the finest of its period in the Western United States.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Walter A. Haas was president of Levi Strauss and Co. from 1928-1955 and was likely introduced to Elise Stern by her father. Elise Stern Haas papers, 1914-1955, The Magnes Collection of Jewish art and Life, University of California, Berkeley, <https://magnes.berkeley.edu/collections/archives/western-jewish-american/haas-elise-stern-papers-1914-1955>.

<sup>59</sup> Narell, p. 366.

<sup>60</sup> Elise Stern Haas papers, 1914-1955.

<sup>61</sup> Florence Blumenthal frequently showered her family with elaborate gifts. Following the completion of the Blumenthals’ Park Avenue home in 1916, she sent each of her siblings and their children a little gift. Rosalie Stern and her daughter, Elise, both received a valuable bracelet, and Florence’s mother received a pair of Cartier Egyptian-style earrings with diamonds, onyx, and emeralds. Narell, p. 361; Elise Stern Haas papers, 1914-1955.

<sup>62</sup> Elise Stern purchased an important collection of Matisse paintings, including one of his greatest works, “Femme au Chapeau,” directly from Gertrude Stein’s sister-in-law, Sarah Stein, who relocated from Paris to Palo Alto in 1938, and maintained a life-long friendship with Gertrude Stein’s partner, Alice B. Toklas. Elise Stern likely befriended Toklas, a fellow native of San Francisco, before relocating to Paris in 1907. Narell, p. 369; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice\\_B.\\_Toklas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_B._Toklas).

<sup>63</sup> In addition to modern paintings, Elise Stern also collected modern sculpture and French tapestries. Grace Glueck, “San Francisco Getting a Major Modern Art Collection,” *The New York Times* (February 7, 1991); Narell, p. 370.

In 1964, Elise Stern Haas was elected president of the board of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the first woman to hold the position, and, in 1971, established the first endowment fund to provide a conservation laboratory devoted to the conservation of twentieth-century art, the first of its kind on the West Coast. Elise Stern Haas bequeathed her entire collection to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art following her death in 1990.<sup>64</sup> While almost fifty years after the Blumenthal bequest to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the tradition of bequeathing one's art collection to a public institution for the benefit of future generations endured in the Meyer family. (See Part 3 for more information on the Blumenthal bequest)

After replacing her mother on the women's board of the San Francisco Museum of Art, Elise ultimately became its president, the first woman to head a major art museum in the United States.<sup>65</sup> She was also president of the board of the Mount Zion Hospital and founded its cardiovascular research department.<sup>66</sup> In addition, Elise supported The San Francisco Conservatory, donated the stained-glass windows to Congregation Emanu-El, as well as a Braque painting to the Jerusalem Museum. According to her husband, Walter A. Haas, the couple were always "American citizens first, [but] have nevertheless been devoted friends of Israel."<sup>67</sup> Like many Jewish philanthropists during this period, it was common custom not to be religiously inclined, yet support and serve on the boards of Jewish institutions and organizations.<sup>68</sup> One could also be a Zionist, or supporter of the Jewish nation of Israel, and not practice Judaism. While Walter and Elise Haas were interested in public affairs and made donations to Jewish causes and organizations, Elise was not a practicing Jew.<sup>69</sup> Jewish identity, instead, for Elise's immediate family represented a cultural and philanthropic identity rather than a religious one.

Elise and Walter Haas' three children, Walter Jr., Rhoda, and Peter Haas, succeeded by

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<sup>64</sup> Glueck, *The New York Times*.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Narell, p. 370.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>69</sup> An example of Elise's secular nature occurred in 1957 when she exhibited a wooden crucifix at the Cathedral House at Grace Cathedral and was awarded first prize. Elise Stern Haas Papers, 1914-1955, BANC MSS 2010/533, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



their children and grandchildren, continued the same tradition of giving back to the community and to the city of San Francisco. Rhoda Haas and her husband, Richard Goldman, established the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund in 1951 to support a diverse number of causes, including efforts to support Israel and the Jewish community, as well to sustain cultural institutions and expand educational opportunities.<sup>70</sup> Rhoda Goldman also established the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize that honors environmental supporters worldwide on an annual basis.<sup>71</sup> Similar to the organization of the *Fondation Américaine pour la Défense de la Pensée et de l'Art Français* created by Florence Blumenthal seventy years earlier, an international jury is involved in the Goldman Prize selection.<sup>72</sup> (See more information on the *Fondation* later in this chapter) Florence Blumenthal's *Fondation* may well have served as a model for Rhoda Goldman in the establishment of this global mission to support philanthropic endeavors and environmental concerns.

Rhoda Goldman's brother, Walter Haas Jr. and his wife Evelyn Haas, played a significant role in shaping the city of San Francisco by supporting a number of causes primarily related to education and preservation beginning in the 1950s.<sup>73</sup> The third sibling, Peter Haas and his wife Miriam, created The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund in order to provide the resources for many charitable endeavors, focusing on youth development.<sup>74</sup>

Like the Blumenthals, the Meyer Stern family also enjoyed a relationship with the French decorator and designer Armand-Albert Rateau (1882-1938). Perhaps as a result of

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<sup>70</sup> American Jerusalem, Jews and the Making of San Francisco.”

<sup>71</sup> Teresa Moore, “Rhoda Haas Goldman, Philanthropist, Dies at 71,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 18, 1996).

<sup>72</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldman\\_Environmental\\_Prize](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldman_Environmental_Prize)

<sup>73</sup> The Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund, created in 1953, focuses on immigration and gay rights and education, and has been a key player in restoring parts of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area of San Francisco. Walter Haas Jr. also endowed University of California, Berkeley's business school, the Haas School of Business, in memory of his father, Walter Haas Sr. He also served as the lead benefactor in the renovation of the Haas Pavilion, home of the university's basketball and volleyball teams. “American Jerusalem, Jews and the Making of San Francisco.”

<sup>74</sup> The Miriam and Peter Haas Fund was the lead contributor to the endowment of the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford University. “American Jerusalem, Jews and the Making of San Francisco.”



Florence's introduction to Rateau, or else in an effort to emulate her sister's taste, Rosalie Meyer Stern commissioned a suite of dining room furniture inlaid with straw marquetry, including a dining table, seven dining chairs, and matching sideboard while living in Paris in the 1920s.<sup>75</sup> (Fig. 10) (See Part 2A for more information on Rateau's work for the Blumenthals) Elise Stern Haas later bequeathed the table and chairs from the Rateau suite to The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco and were ultimately donated by her daughter Rhoda Goldman in 1986.<sup>76</sup> Following in the footsteps of the Blumenthals, Rosalie Meyer Stern and her children continued the tradition of supporting young, contemporary artists.

Elise "Liza" Meyer (1872-1952), the second eldest Meyer child, married Sigmund Stern's brother, Abraham Stern (1864-1912), secretary of Levi Strauss & Co, in 1900 and the couple built a house next door to sister Rosalie and brother Sigmund.<sup>77</sup> In 1906, the two couples purchased a twenty-acre plot of land in Atherton, south of San Francisco, and constructed large summer homes with extensive gardens and pools.<sup>78</sup> Following Abraham Stern's unexpected death at an early age in 1912, it was noted that Elise became a wealthy "gay widow" and divided her time between New York and an elegantly decorated home in Paris.<sup>79</sup> She became a prominent social figure in Paris, surrounding herself with local aristocrats and nobility.<sup>80</sup> It was during this period that Elise Stern, who certainly overlapped socially and philanthropically with the Blumenthals in Paris, collaborated with Florence to create the *Jardins d'enfants*, or children's playground, in

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<sup>75</sup> Object file for Rateau suite of furniture 1986.86.1-.8, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Narell, p. 360; <http://www.fanta-levey.com/familygroup.php?familyID=F2014&tree=tree2>

<sup>78</sup> All three Stern brothers, Abraham, Sigmund, and Louis, purchased large properties on Atherton Avenue; Abraham Stern's house was built in the old English style, and Sigmund Stern's was more elaborately designed with a cement finish and was singled out as one of the more impressive villas in the region in a newspaper article from 1911. "Fair Oaks is Site of Many Stately Villas," *California Digital Newspaper Collection*, San Francisco Call, Volume 109, Number 164, 13 May 1911, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SFC19110513.2.58.1>; Narell, p. 360.

<sup>79</sup> Narell, p. 361; "Ptomaines Kill Abraham Stern," *California Digital Newspaper Collection*, San Francisco Call, Volume 111, Number 46 (January 15, 1912), <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SFC19120115.2.106>; Graham, p. 79.

<sup>80</sup> Graham, p. 79.

the thirteenth district, renamed the “Square Florence Blumenthal” in 1931 following Florence’s death.<sup>81</sup>

In 1933, Elise Stern married her second husband, Brazilian diplomat and Ambassador to France, Luis Martins de Souza Dantas (1876-1954).<sup>82</sup> Born to an aristocratic, non-Jewish family, Souza Dantas joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, became a dean of the diplomatic corps (a position of distinction), and was credited with saving hundreds of Jews from Nazi persecution by issuing diplomatic visas for entry into Brazil while serving as Ambassador to the Vichy Government during the German occupation.<sup>83</sup> It has been reported that Elise’s marriage to Souza Dantas was not a happy one and, according to one relative, “the marriage lasted about fifteen minutes.”<sup>84</sup> It was also remarked that Elise’s unpleasant behavior during this period (perhaps as a result of her unhappy marriage or problems with her son from her first marriage, John Stern) apparently upset Florence Blumenthal, and Rosalie Stern was frequently called upon to serve as moderator and peacemaker between the two sisters in Paris.<sup>85</sup>

The fourth Meyer child, Eugene Isaac Meyer (1875-1959), or Eugene Meyer Jr. (named after his father and grandfather) was groomed to be the heir apparent of his father’s banking dynasty and became a highly successful investor and distinguished public servant.<sup>86</sup> (See Fig. 12) After beginning his career at Lazard Frères, Eugene left in 1904 to start his own firm, Eugene Meyer and Company, partially supported by family members’ investments (including George Blumenthal) and became a millionaire by

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<sup>81</sup> Lettre de George Blumenthal de l’Association Florence Blumenthal, 10 juin, 1931, MS-FS-02-0565, Fond Benjamin Crémieux, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris; Pierre-Christian Tattinger, “Florence Blumenthal, 1873-1930, Une Présence Américaine à Paris,” *Bulletin de la Société Historique d’Auteuil et de Passy*, v. XVIII, no. 146 (2001), p. 9; <http://www.parisru.es.com/rues13/paris-13-square-florence-blumenthal.html>.

<sup>82</sup> Graham, p. 79; <http://www.fanta-levey.com/familygroup.php?familyID=F2014&tree=tree2>

<sup>83</sup> Graham, p. 79; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis\\_Martins\\_de\\_Souza\\_Dantas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_Martins_de_Souza_Dantas).

<sup>84</sup> Narell, p. 362.

<sup>85</sup> Following a brief stint at Levi Strauss & Co., John Stern, became a playboy and an alcoholic and ultimately took his own life. Narell, pp. 361-362.

<sup>86</sup> Narell, p. 347.

1906.<sup>87</sup> Eugene Meyer Jr. remained close to his parents and siblings throughout his adult life, often assisting them financially. He was interested in art and collected etchings (particularly Durer and Whistler), first edition American manuscripts, and letters.<sup>88</sup> While it is unclear if Eugene Meyer's art collection survives intact today, examples of modern paintings and sculptures he collected with his wife, Agnes Ernst Meyer (1887-1970), are conserved today at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (See below for more information)

Eugene Meyer met Agnes Ernst (1887-1970), a Lutheran of German origin from outside New York City, in 1908 in an art gallery in Washington D.C.<sup>89</sup> (See Fig. 13) During their courtship, family memoirs recount that Agnes Ernst often referred to Eugene Meyer in her diaries as her "rich Jewish beau" and, despite not being particularly religious either, she echoed the existing anti-Semitic sentiments of the day.<sup>90</sup>

Agnes graduated from Barnard College, studied literature at Sorbonne University in Paris, and became one of the first female reporters hired by *The New York Sun*.<sup>91</sup> While in Paris, Agnes encountered collectors Leo and Gertrude Stein, as well as artists Pablo Picasso, Constantin Brancusi, and Auguste Rodin, of which the latter two became lifelong friends.<sup>92</sup> Immersed in the artistic and social life in New York, Agnes worked for a new modern gallery called "291" and became particularly passionate about

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<sup>87</sup> While at Lazard Freres, Eugene Meyer met and dated Irene Untermyer, brother of Justice Irwin Untermyer who later bequeathed an important art collection to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Eugene Meyer Sr. was very disappointed by his son's departure from Lazard and viewed it as a rejection of his life's work. Graham, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> Graham, p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> Eugene Meyer met Agnes Ernst following a meeting with President Theodore Roosevelt regarding a bust of Lincoln that Meyer planned to donate to the Nation. Graham, pp. 10-11.

<sup>90</sup> Graham, pp. 15, 17.

<sup>91</sup> <https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/mep/displaydoc.cfm?docid=erp-n-agnmey> (accessed: July 22, 2016).

<sup>92</sup> In 1929, Brancusi executed a black marble sculpture of Agnes Meyer that Eugene and Agnes Meyer donated to the National Gallery of Art in 1967. <https://bento.si.edu/behind-the-scenes/busted-the-secret-lives-of-agnes-meyer-and-charles-lang-freer/> (accessed July 22, 2016); Graham, p. 15.

collecting modern art.<sup>93</sup> Agnes' cultural and artistic engagement with artists, patrons, and collectors in Paris and New York during the early twentieth century reinforces the influential connections and artistic circles of the extended Meyer family surrounding Florence Blumenthal, however perhaps more closely aligned with the interests of Florence's niece, Elise Stern Haas.

Eugene Meyer Jr. and Agnes Ernst married in 1909 and raised five children: Florence Meyer Homolka (1911-1962), Elizabeth Meyer Lorentz (1914-2001), Katharine Meyer Graham (1917-2001), Ruth Meyer Epstein (1921-2007), and Eugene Meyer III "aka Bill" (1915-1982). (See Fig. 14) During the early years of their marriage, Eugene and Agnes lived in a country estate, known as "the farm," in Mount Kisco, New York and purchased a large house on Park Avenue and 70<sup>th</sup> Street, not far from the Blumenthals.<sup>94</sup> The Meyer family later moved into a two-story penthouse apartment on Fifth Avenue at the corner of 63<sup>rd</sup> street.<sup>95</sup> Similar to George and Florence's interest in collecting, Eugene and Agnes collected modern paintings and sculpture and donated many works from their collection, including pieces by Paul Cezanne, Auguste Renoir, Edouard Manet, Diego Rivera, Antoine-Louis Bayre, and Constantin Brancusi, to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. during the 1950s and 1960s where they are still conserved today.<sup>96</sup>

As recounted by their daughter, Katharine Graham, in her memoirs, the Meyers experienced social discrimination and anti-Semitism, despite not practicing or identifying with Judaism in their daily family life:

Only later did I learn that my parents had suffered from local anti-Semitism. They had, I believe, been warned when they first started to build the large stone house that they would be snubbed socially. And, in fact, they were never invited to their neighbors' houses and were excluded from the country club until it went broke, at which time they were asked to join...Remarkably, the fact that we were half Jewish was never mentioned any more than money was discussed. I was totally-incredibly-unaware of

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<sup>93</sup> <https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/mep/displaydoc.cfm?docid=erpn-agnmey>; Graham, pp. 14-15, 19.

<sup>94</sup> Graham, pp. 18, 20; [http://npg.si.edu/object/npg\\_NPG.2001.34](http://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2001.34).

<sup>95</sup> Graham, p. 25.

<sup>96</sup> For more information on the Meyer's gifts to the National Gallery of Art, see <https://www.nga.gov/global-site-search-page.html?searchterm=Eugene+and+Agnes+Meyer>.

anti-Semitism, let alone of my father's being Jewish. I don't think this was deliberate; I am sure my parents were not denying or hiding my father's Jewishness from us, nor were they ashamed of it. But there was enough sensitivity so that it was never explained or taken pride in...all of us Meyer children were baptized at home to satisfy my devout Lutheran maternal grandmother...But for the most part, religion was not part of our lives.<sup>97</sup>

In an interview with Eugene Meyer Jr. in 1952, he openly recounted his experience with anti-Semitism and discrimination as a young boy into during his career in government:

My family were not Orthodox Jews. I discovered early in the public school in San Francisco that Jews were different. "Sheeney" is what they called a Jewish boy. There wasn't anything I could do about it. Never tried to pretend I wasn't. My father didn't warn me that I would run across this sort of thing and I don't think I ever mentioned it to him. I didn't like it because it was unfair. I've run into it all my life—even in government. I didn't pay much attention to those things. I grew up into a feeling of, "Well, there it is. You can't change it, so why think about it." I had the feeling always in business and in public service particularly, that I had a special responsibility as a Jew to prove that a Jew could be as honorable as anybody.<sup>98</sup>

Eugene Meyer Jr.'s Jewish roots would be revisited yet again during World War II when he brought over two families of his French Jewish relatives to America, helped support them, find them jobs, and finance their children's' education.<sup>99</sup>

Eugene Meyer Jr., like his other siblings, used his wealth for the public good and became involved with many welfare organizations. He was also interested in mental health and served as a member of the Finance Committee and as president of Mount Sinai Hospital,

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<sup>97</sup> Graham, pp. 37, 52.

<sup>98</sup> "Eugene Meyer, Interviews, January 6, 1952-May 6," 1952, Columbia University Oral History Research Office, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Eugene Meyer's cousin, Léon Zadoc Kahn (1870-1943), son of Rabbi Zadon Kahn (1839-1905), and his wife Suzanne Lang (1876-1943) declined Eugene's offer to help them leave Europe and perished at Auschwitz. Their son Bertrand, a doctor who was head of the American Hospital in Paris, committed suicide when France was invaded by Nazi Germany. Bertrand's sister, Jacqueline, remained in France and was hidden by a Catholic family. Graham, p. 132.

another connection to George Blumenthal.<sup>100</sup> He also established a fund at Yale University to train young men for public service.<sup>101</sup>

In 1917, Eugene and Agnes Meyer relocated from New York to Washington, D.C. where Eugene held a series of financial positions with the federal government, including managing director of the War Finance Corporation during World War I, chairman of the Federal Reserve between 1930-1933, and president of the World Bank in 1946.<sup>102</sup> In 1933, Eugene purchased the newspaper, *The Washington Post*, for which Agnes often contributed articles. In 1946, Eugene Meyer turned over the newspaper to his son-in-law, Phillip Graham, which was eventually inherited by his daughter, Katharine Graham, following Graham's death in 1963.<sup>103</sup>

In the latter part of her life, Agnes served as an activist for labor, civil and women's rights, earning her a position on President John F. Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>104</sup> Her philanthropic activities included extensive support for the New School for Social Research and the creation of the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation in 1944, still in existence today, which distributes millions of dollars to a variety of health and education projects.<sup>105</sup> In addition, Agnes was passionate about improving public education and created and financially supported the Urban School Corps and the National Committee for Support of the Public Schools.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Graham, p. 24; *Mount Sinai Hospital Annual Report, 1914-1916* (New York, NY: Mount Sinai Hospital, 1916), p. 156. George Blumenthal served as President of Mt. Sinai Hospital between 1911-1938.

<sup>101</sup> Graham, p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> Graham, p. 25; Michael G. Schechter, 'Meyer, Eugene Isaac' in *IO BIO, Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries- General of International Organizations*, Edited by Bob Reinalda, Kent J. Kille and Jaci Eisenberg, [www.ru.nl/fm/iobio](http://www.ru.nl/fm/iobio) (Accessed February 24, 2017).

<sup>103</sup> In 1969, Katharine Graham became publisher of the *Washington Post*, as well as President of the company. She became the first female Fortune 500 CEO in 1972 and the only woman to be in such a high position at a publishing company. She was at the helm of the paper during crucial times in history, such as Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign, Watergate and the Vietnam War. Graham, pp. 406, 416; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katharine\\_Graham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katharine_Graham).

<sup>104</sup> <https://bento.si.edu/behind-the-scenes/busted-the-secret-lives-of-agnes-meyer-and-charles-lang-freer/>.

<sup>105</sup> For more information on the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, see <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/53-0241716>.

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/mep/displaydoc.cfm?docid=erpn-agnmey>.

Agnes remained connected to the artistic world of collectors and dealers and developed a long-standing friendship with Detroit industrialist and museum founder Charles Lang Freer. She donated pieces of her own collection of Asian art to the Freer Gallery, as well as funds for the Gallery's Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Auditorium.<sup>107</sup>

After the birth of Eugene Meyer Jr., Eugene Meyer and Harriet Newmark welcomed a fifth child, daughter Ruth Meyer (b. 1877), who married wealthy New York attorney Alfred Cook; a sixth child, Aline Meyer, who married Charles Liebman in 1908, one of the brothers who owned Rheingold Breweries; and a seventh child, son Walter Meyer. As in the case of Rosalie, Elise, and Florence Meyer, the younger daughters were all expected to marry well.<sup>108</sup>

Like her sister, Rosalie, Aline Meyer Liebman (1879-1966) was also a client of Rateau.<sup>109</sup> It is also possible that Aline was introduced to Rateau through César de Hauke of De Hauke & Co., a contemporary New York branch of the Seligman gallery, of which Aline Meyer Liebman was a client.<sup>110</sup>

Aline Meyer Liebman commissioned Rateau to decorate furniture for several rooms of her new duplex apartment at 907 Fifth Avenue, to which she relocated in 1926.<sup>111</sup> A photograph of the sitting room reveals Rateau's use of reflective surfaces in the background, such as lacquer and mirrors, to create a sense of expansion, as well as hand painted wallpaper with floral motifs to reference a relationship between the indoors and

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<sup>107</sup> Eugene and Agnes' daughter, Ruth Meyer Epstein, donated a bronze head of Agnes Meyer sculpted by Charles Despiau in 1928 to the Freer that sits outside the Meyer Auditorium today. <https://bento.si.edu/behind-the-scenes/busted-the-secret-lives-of-agnes-meyer-and-charles-lang-freer/>.

<sup>108</sup> Narell, p. 360; Berger, p. 43.

<sup>109</sup> It has been suggested that Aline Liebman first met Rateau at the Paris International Exposition of 1925, however as an independent designer, he did not participate in the 1925 Exposition. Aline did, nevertheless, acquire work by several different artists who did not exhibit at the 1925 Paris Exposition, such as Jean Dunand, Claudius Linossier, Fernand Léger, and Pierre Legrain, for her Fifth Avenue home. Berger, p. 40; notes from conversation with independent historian Jared Goss, New York, October 5, 2016.

<sup>110</sup> Notes from conversation with independent historian Jared Goss, New York, October 5, 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Prior to 1926, the Liebmans resided at 12 East 87<sup>th</sup> Street in New York. Berger, p. 43.

outdoors.<sup>112</sup> (See Fig 15) Rateau also designed chairs in solid oak with feet in form of ram's heads for the sitting room and the furniture for Aline Liebman's bedroom, including tables, chairs, bed, and sofa, as well as lamps, mirrors, and wall brackets.<sup>113</sup> In addition, Rateau designed a lamp and chair for the music room and lamps, side-brackets and rugs for the gallery.<sup>114</sup> He also designed a door key and doorknocker, incense burner with four figurines, a three-fold mirror to be hung on the wall, and a mantel clock.<sup>115</sup> In addition, Rateau supervised the installation of the wall-coverings, draperies, and rugs for the Liebman interiors.<sup>116</sup>

Aline Meyer Liebman demonstrated a passion for collecting early on and was a talented painter and photographer.<sup>117</sup> Like her sister-in-law, Agnes Meyer, Aline was also an avid collector of modern paintings, drawings, and sculpture, and visited galleries and artists' studios in Paris, purchasing works by such artists as Gauguin, Vlaminck, Van Gogh, Maillol, Degas, Picasso, and Cezanne.<sup>118</sup> To celebrate the Liebman's new Fifth Avenue home, George and Florence Blumenthal purchased a bronze statue of Degas' *Little Fourteen-Year Old Dancer* from the Parisian gallery A.A. Hébrard, illustrating Florence's artistic connections and cultural prominence in Paris.<sup>119</sup> (See Fig. 15)

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<sup>112</sup> Franck Olivier-Vial and François Rateau, *Armand Albert Rateau: un baroque chez les modernes* (Paris: Les Editions de l'Amateur, 1992), p. 140.

<sup>113</sup> Berger, p. 57.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>116</sup> Berger, p. 57.

<sup>117</sup> In 1937, the San Francisco Museum of Art (today SFMOMA) organized an exhibit of Aline Meyer Liebman's work. Caitlin Haskell, "Currents within a Collection: Aline M. Liebman," (May 28, 2013), <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2013/05/haas-series-4/>.

<sup>118</sup> Berger, p. 43. Aline's husband, Charles Liebman, was also an avid art collector and the two formed a collecting partnership similar to the Blumenthals. See "The Liebman collection of valuable modern paintings, drawings, and sculptures," Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York (December 7, 1955).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*; Olivier-Vial and Rateau. p. 140. In Olivier-Vial and Rateau's text, the photograph of the sitting room with the Degas *Dancer* and Rateau chairs is incorrectly identified as George and Florence's chateau at Malbosc. The Degas *Dancer* was later sold at auction in 1955. See "The Liebman collection of valuable modern paintings, drawings, and sculptures," Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York (December 7, 1955).



Florence Blumenthal was not the only one to introduce her sisters to contemporary artists, designers, and cultural figures. Through Aline's introduction to Georgia O'Keeffe and her husband, photographer Alfred Stieglitz, Florence Blumenthal purchased a work by O'Keeffe that is referenced in correspondence between Stieglitz and Aline Liebman.<sup>120</sup> Similar to Florence Blumenthal's support of contemporary artists supported by her *Foundation*, Aline Meyer Liebman also encouraged contemporary artists and commissioned a self-portrait from a young, German artist in 1927, conserved today in the Jewish Museum in New York.<sup>121</sup> (See Fig 16) In addition to Aline's connection to modern art collectors and influential artistic circles, such as Sarah Stein (sister-in-law of Gertrude and Leo Stein), and as well as contemporary artists, such as Brancusi, Rivera, and O'Keeffe, she was also a practicing artist who exhibited her paintings in a solo exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art (today SFMOMA) in 1937.<sup>122</sup> (See Fig. 17)

Aline Meyer Liebman and George and Florence Blumenthal's overlapping artistic circles indeed converged on both sides of the Atlantic. Aline Liebman was also friendly with Albert Lévy, publisher of the Librairie Centrale des Beaux-Arts, who was responsible for the publication of the Blumenthal collection catalogue between 1926-1930.<sup>123</sup> During the same years that George Blumenthal served as president of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Aline Liebman was instrumental in the inception and early years of the Museum of Modern Art in New York where she served as Chairman of the Executive Committee of exhibitions, collaborating with Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Chairman of the Membership Committee, and lent paintings and sculpture from her collection.<sup>124</sup> Both institutions were aware of each other's activities and their important link in the artistic life of America, and it is interesting to note that while George Blumenthal was

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<sup>120</sup> Rosalie Meyer Stern also became a collector of Georgia O'Keeffe's work as a result of her introduction to the artist through her sister, Aline. Berger, pp. 34-35; Haskell.

<sup>121</sup> Stefan Hirsch (1899-1964), "Portrait of Aline Meyer Liebman," 1927, The Jewish Museum, accession number 1993-194, <http://thejewishmuseum.org/collection/3859-portrait-of-aline-meyer-liebman>.

<sup>122</sup> Haskell.

<sup>123</sup> Berger, p. 45.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 68-70.

collaborating with John D. Rockefeller Jr. at The Metropolitan Museum of Art to build the Cloisters, Aline Meyer Liebman was collaborating with Rockefeller's wife.<sup>125</sup>

### The Blumenthal Family

George ("Gustav") Blumenthal was born on April 7, 1858 in Frankfurt, Germany, the youngest of three children, to Hermann Blumenthal (1825-1903), originally from Rennertehausen (Hessen), and Helene Stiebel (1826-1905), from Frankfurt.<sup>126</sup> (See Fig. 18) George's brother, Albert Blumenthal, was born in Frankfurt on June 26, 1853 and his sister, Mathilde Blumenthal, was born in Frankfurt on September 11, 1856.<sup>127</sup> Prior to marrying Helene Stiebel in Frankfurt on September 6, 1852, Hermann Blumenthal sent a request to the senate of the Free City of Frankfurt for permission to become a citizen and merchant, of Israelite faith, and was granted citizenship on September 17, 1852.<sup>128</sup> (See Fig. 19) Hermann Blumenthal completed an apprenticeship with the merchant company, Wolff Brothers, before becoming independent, most likely trading in textiles, spices, glass, and other commodities.<sup>129</sup>

Beginning in the fourteenth century, Frankfurt served as an important center of trade and several mercantile cooperatives had strong international trade relations.<sup>130</sup> During the nineteenth century, and during Hermann Blumenthal's career, Jewish merchants and

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<sup>125</sup> Letter from George Blumenthal to A.C. Goodyear, A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbook, vol. 30 1/22/1934, MoMA Archives, New York.

<sup>126</sup> Hermann Blumenthal's father was merchant Benedict Veit Blumenthal. Helene Stiebel's parents were Martin Stiebel and Jette Amschel. Microfilm Film 3 G1851-1898 Ffm. Von: 1857, Bd. 1, Jun ibis: 1860, Bd. 1, Mai, Frankfurt City Archives.

<sup>127</sup> Microfilm Film 3 G1851-1898 Ffm. Von: 1857, Bd. 1, Jun ibis: 1860, Bd. 1, Mai, Frankfurt City Archives.

<sup>128</sup> All residents, independent of religion, had to request permission to become a citizen. Helen's father, Martin Stiebel, was already a citizen of Frankfurt and Hermann stated in his request that he intended to marry Helene Stiebel, hoping that would support his appeal. In July 1852, the City of Frankfurt responded to Hermann Blumenthal granting him permission for citizenship, on the condition that he married Helene Stiebel and could prove that the city of Battenfeld Hessen granted him permission to leave. Senatssupplikationen 573/12, Frankfurt City Archives.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Carl-Ludwig Holtfreich, *Frankfurt as a Financial Centre: From Medieval Trade Fair to European Banking Centre* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), p. 36.

money handlers played an important role in the economic development of the city.<sup>131</sup> Jews have lived in Frankfurt continuously beginning in the twelfth century, longer than in any other German city, and often worked as merchants, bankers, politicians, philanthropists, artists and scientists.<sup>132</sup> While severe restrictions and Jewish ghettos were established in the fifteenth century, the mid-nineteenth century experienced Jewish emancipation and the granting of broad-based civic rights that put Jews on an equal footing with the rest of the citizenry.<sup>133</sup> Beginning in 1864, the Jewish population became more engaged socially, economically and culturally, and supported numerous public institutions.<sup>134</sup> Frankfurt also soon developed into a center of Jewish learning and was home to many famous rabbis who were internationally respected. It was also during the nineteenth century that Frankfurt became the home to new Jewish movements, including Reform Judaism and Neo-Orthodoxy.<sup>135</sup>

Although he was from a merchant class family, George Blumenthal would go on to make his fortune in the banking industry, with a particular niche in the buying and selling of securities.<sup>136</sup> George Blumenthal emigrated to the United States on May 8, 1882, at the age of twenty-four, after being transferred to New York by the German bank Lazard Speyer-Ellissen, later renamed Speyer & Company in 1876.<sup>137</sup> During these early years

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<sup>131</sup> “Jewish Sites in Frankfurt am Main (online), <http://en.juedisches-frankfurt.de> (accessed December 19, 2017).

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> For more literature on Jewish bankers during this period, see Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996); William D. Cohan, *The Last Tycoons: The Secret History of Lazard Frères & Co.* (New York: First Anchor Books, 2008); Vincent P. Carosso, “A Financial Elite: New York’s German-Jewish Investment Bankers,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 1 (September 1976), pp. 67-88; Niall Ferguson, *The World’s Banker. The History of the House of Rothschild* (London: W&N: 1998); Vivian B. Mann, Richard I. Cohen, Fritz Backhaus, eds., *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power: 1600-1800* (Watchung, New Jersey: Roy P. Jensen Inc., 1996); Elizabeth Cleland, “Collecting Sixteenth-Century Tapestries in Twentieth Century America: The Blumenthals and Jacques Seligmann,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, volume 50/2015, p. 149.

<sup>137</sup> The Speyers were the wealthiest Jewish family in Frankfurt, above the Rothschilds. Blumenthal, Arthur R. *George Blumenthal: Art Collector and Patron* (New York, Institute of Fine Arts, 1965, p. 2; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speyer\\_family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speyer_family).

in New York, Blumenthal was a member of a small syndicate that included successful and established New York bankers, including J. Pierpont Morgan, Jacob H. Schiff, Walter Luttgen, and Mr. Thieret, who together pledged funds to manage the outflow of gold and promote importations.<sup>138</sup> This early association with the leading bankers of the day, including German Jewish immigrants from the previous generation, must have greatly impacted George Blumenthal's career. His professional work with Morgan must have also influenced the shape of his own future collecting.<sup>139</sup>

It is certain that George Blumenthal knew and collaborated with J.P. Morgan during Morgan's presidency at the Metropolitan Museum of Art between 1904-1913, during which time Blumenthal was an active member of the board.<sup>140</sup> Based on the fact that Blumenthal's first donations of small works of art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art commenced shortly after Morgan's election as President in 1904, resulting in Blumenthal's own election to the board in 1909 and his subsequent involvement in the opening of the new Decorative Arts Wing in 1910 showcasing Morgan's collection, it is extremely likely that Morgan helped Blumenthal secure his position on the board and served as an explicit collecting model and mentor. Morgan was also one of the greatest benefactors and core donors of the Museum's European Decorative Arts Department and an avid collector of Medieval art, eighteenth-century French decorative arts, and rare books, three principal areas of collecting that also greatly appealed to George Blumenthal, who, similar to Morgan, amassed a library of books and manuscripts which he later sold at auction in Paris in 1932 and 1933.<sup>141</sup> (See Part 3 for more information on the Blumenthal collection sales) The two businessmen and collectors also shared other common collecting characteristics, including their lifelong appreciation of the visual arts, and neither was considered a scholarly connoisseur who studied their acquisitions in great

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<sup>138</sup> "George Blumenthal, 43 Years in Wall street, Quits Banking for Philanthropic Work," *The New York Times* (December 31, 1925).

<sup>139</sup> Calvin Tomkins, *Merchant and Masterpieces, The Story of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1970), p. 220.

<sup>140</sup> Jean Strouse "J. Pierpont Morgan Financier and Collector," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (Winter 2000), p. 4.

<sup>141</sup> See sale catalogues "Bibliothèque George Blumenthal," Galerie Georges Petit, December 5-7, 1932 and "Bibliothèque George Blumenthal," Hotel Drouot, June 6-7, 1933.

depth.<sup>142</sup> The two men were also able leaders and presidents of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, made several gifts to the Museum, and encouraged friends and colleagues to make donations.<sup>143</sup> However, unlike Blumenthal who bequeathed a substantial part of his collection to the Museum upon his death, it was Morgan's son, J.P. Morgan Jr., who bequeathed the Museum a large part of his father's collection.<sup>144</sup> (Morgan's influence on George Blumenthal will be discussed further in Part 2A)

In July 1888, Blumenthal joined the New York branch of the French bank Lazard Frères, and not long after, became senior partner, a position he held from 1893 until his retirement in 1925.<sup>145</sup> Although the firm experienced a more lucrative market under Blumenthal's tenure, there was a dramatic difference of opinion in the company's strategy and investing principles between the younger associates who had developed a new, American boldness, like Blumenthal, and his European colleagues in Paris, like Alexandre Weill, who retained more conservative European philosophies on international banking. Although Blumenthal did not share the same opinions and long-term political visions of management as his older colleagues, he nevertheless exuded tremendous influence over his associates and possessed undeniable financial talents.<sup>146</sup> As a result, George Blumenthal was commonly described as "touchy" and in need of management by colleagues and partners, including Eugene Meyer, George Blumenthal's future father-in-law, and Eugene Arnstein.<sup>147</sup> This tension, no doubt, placed Meyer and Arnstein in an uncomfortable position; on one hand supporting Blumenthal's business vision in New York, while striving to preserve the bonds of friendship that reunited the founders of Lazard overseas.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Blumenthal has been described as a tactile collector rather than scholarly. Timothy Wilson, *Maiolica: Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), p. 342; Strouse, p. 21.

<sup>143</sup> Strouse, p. 36.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2.

<sup>145</sup> Guy de Rougemont, *Lazard Frères, Banquiers des Deux Mondes (1840-1939)* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2010), p. 190.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* p. 195.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 195-196.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

On January 25, 1898 in New York, George Blumenthal married Florence Meyer, whom he was likely introduced to through his colleague and future father-in-law, Eugene Meyer.<sup>149</sup> That same year, George and Florence welcomed a son, George Blumenthal Jr., who died prematurely at the age of ten.<sup>150</sup> (See Figs. 20a-c) The loss of their son would play a significant role in the Blumenthal's collecting. (See Part 3 for more information)

In 1901, George Blumenthal resigned from Lazard Frères, however returned in April 1904 as associate of the London and Paris branches, reserving the right to select his co-directors in New York.<sup>151</sup> In this new role, George Blumenthal traveled to Paris every spring with frequent business visits to seaside towns in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, while simultaneously managing business in New York.<sup>152</sup> Even in his new role during this transatlantic period, Blumenthal was continuously described as “*un homme dur*,” or harsh.<sup>153</sup> Although we have no concrete evidence, it is very likely that George's early interest in art and collecting was formed during these trips abroad.

In 1914, at the beginning of World War I, George and Florence Blumenthal were based in Paris and left for Nice for safety while several other Lazard colleagues remained in Paris and enlisted in the French army. Although born in Germany, George Blumenthal became an American citizen in 1893 and felt no sympathy towards the Central Powers or their actions during the war.<sup>154</sup> While living in the south of France, George encountered Michel Lazard and members of other international banks, such as Rothschild, J.P. Morgan, Mallet, Crédit industriel, Vernes Crédit Lyonnais, and Société Générale.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> In letters to her siblings in San Francisco, Florence Meyer recounted that Mr. Lazard came to dinner and dined at Mr. Altschul's the following evening. Although we have no concrete evidence, it is possible that George Blumenthal was also present and may have been introduced to Florence. De Rougemont, p. 276; Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers BANC MSS 2010/64, Carton 1:17 “RM Stern Correspondence, 1891,” Bancroft Library University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>150</sup> Germain Seligman, *Merchants of Art, 1880-1960, Eighty Years of Professional Collecting* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961), p. 144.

<sup>151</sup> De Rougemont, pp. 281, 299, 300.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 345, 347.

These relationships with established bankers, many of whom were important collectors, must have impacted George's exposure to private art collections, auctions, and museums.

At the end of the War, George Blumenthal retired as head of the Lazard offices in London and Paris and returned to New York, however George and Florence did not abandon the tradition of long stays in Europe of which they had become accustomed. A few years later, the couple purchased a large home in Paris in the sixteenth district.<sup>156</sup> (See Part 2B for more information on the Blumenthal's residences in France) During this period, George Blumenthal remained a liberal, solitary thinker and was reputed to have a somewhat of a difficult personality.<sup>157</sup> He did not support the close relationship that his Lazard successor and senior partner, Frank Altschul, maintained with Altschul's in-laws, the rival Lehmans, and Blumenthal officially resigned from Lazard Frères in December 1925 as a result of increased friction with the other associates.<sup>158</sup> The Wall Street Journal announced Blumenthal's departure, referring to him as "one of the largest operators of the Stock Exchange and one of the first traders in the World."<sup>159</sup> Following his departure from Lazard, George Blumenthal decided to devote himself entirely to philanthropy and to his growing collection of European paintings and decorative arts, most likely as a result of the acquisitions made in Europe during this period.<sup>160</sup> It was also during this period that the Blumenthals purchased a home in the south of France near Grasse and commissioned Rateau to decorate the interiors, further developing their taste for modern furnishings. (Part 2B will discuss the Blumenthal's home in Grasse in more detail)

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p. 446.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, p. 448.

<sup>158</sup> The Altschul family was among the upper spheres of the Jewish bourgeoisie in New York during this period. Based on the fact that Lazard partner, Charles Altschul, transferred his seat on the Stock Exchange to George Blumenthal in 1916, we can therefore assume that Blumenthal maintained a long-standing relationship with the family during his career. De Rougemont, p. 448; "Exchange Seats \$63,000. George Blumenthal of Lazard Frères is Back on the Board," *The New York Times* (March 31, 1916).

<sup>159</sup> De Rougemont, p. 449; "George Blumenthal, 43 Years in Wall Street, Quits Banking for Philanthropic Work."

<sup>160</sup> Following his retirement, George Blumenthal maintained an office at 49 Wall Street. "George Blumenthal, 43 Years in Wall street, Quits Banking for Philanthropic Work;" William D. Cohan, *The Last Tycoons* (New York: First Anchor Books, 2008), p. 26; "In Memoriam George Blumenthal, 1858-1941," p. 146.

### Philanthropy

One of George Blumenthal's principal philanthropic causes before, during, and after his marriage to Florence Blumenthal was Mount Sinai Hospital in New York.<sup>161</sup> In 1892, he became a member of the Board of Trustees, was elected secretary in 1893, Vice President in 1907, served as president from 1911-1938, and President emeritus from 1938-1941.<sup>162</sup> George Blumenthal also funded the hospital's first research fellowship in 1907, encouraging the trustees to support, approve, and underwrite subsequent research projects which fostered a close interaction and hands-on relationship between the faculty and students.<sup>163</sup>

George and Florence Blumenthal were equally dedicated to the institution as a couple, donating \$150,000 to build an auditorium on 99<sup>th</sup> Street as a memorial to their late son, George Jr., completed in 1922.<sup>164</sup> (See Fig. 21) The Blumenthal Auditorium was subsequently demolished in 1969 in order to build the Annenberg Building that houses the School of Medicine today.<sup>165</sup>

In October 1932, Mount Sinai Hospital also organized a "Historical Exhibit" as a tribute to George Blumenthal on the occasion of his eightieth birthday that coincided with his forty-sixth year as Trustee and twenty-seventh year as President of the Hospital.<sup>166</sup> (See

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<sup>161</sup> Between 1852-1866, Mount Sinai was chartered as "The Jew's Hospital" in New York, then designated non-sectarian in 1866. Beginning in the 1890s, the hospital's mission expanded from providing great care to a more humanist vision of knowledge for the good of mankind, while maintaining Jewish ethics of giving. George Blumenthal records, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

<sup>162</sup> George Blumenthal's tenure as Vice President and President coincided with a pivotal moment for the institution when it decided to create a school of medicine for education, today known as the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. George Blumenthal records, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

<sup>163</sup> George Blumenthal records, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

<sup>164</sup> "Mrs. Blumenthal, Art Patron, Dead," George Blumenthal records, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

<sup>165</sup> As a result of George Blumenthal's leadership and influence, other members of the Blumenthal family also supported Mount Sinai Hospital, including his cousin, Hugo Blumenthal (d. 1943), referred to as 'Daddy Blumenthal' by students and staff at the School of Nursing, who joined the board of the school in 1912 and served as President of the School of Nursing between 1917-1940, as well as Hugo's son, H. Walter Blumenthal, who served as a member of the board between 1930-1947. George Blumenthal records, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

<sup>166</sup> George Blumenthal records, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, New York.



Fig. 23) A variety of material emphasizing the functional development and physical growth of the institution, including photographs, pictorial graphs, news articles, and awards were selected for display to highlight the institution's evolution and progress since Blumenthal's arrival in 1892.<sup>167</sup> Finally, the October 1932 issue of *The Mount Sinai Hospital Bulletin* featured George Blumenthal on the front page.<sup>168</sup> (See Fig. 24)

In his remarks of appreciation following George Blumenthal's death in 1941, Dr. Sigismund Goldwater, President of the Associated Hospital Service of New York and health commissioner, emphasized Blumenthal's humanitarian qualities and motivation to share the advancements of health with the general public:

“He was eager to spread the blessings of health...He never relinquished the hope that through the advance of science all men might be enabled to share in the solid satisfactions of health, and he believed that all men should do so.”<sup>169</sup>

In recognition of his leadership at the hospital, Blumenthal's second wife, Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson, donated a full-length portrait of George Blumenthal painted by Maxwell B. Starr (1901-1966) to Mount Sinai in 1944 that hangs in the Hospital boardroom today. (See Fig. 25; this portrait is discussed in more detail later in this chapter) The Hospital also conserves a bronze portrait bust sculpted by Paul Landowski and commissioned by George and Florence Blumenthal in 1919. (See Fig. 26) (For more information about the Landowski busts and his relationship to the Blumenthals, see the section “Ideal Beauty and Self-Portraits” later in this chapter).

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<sup>167</sup> Among the progress and growth under George Blumenthal's leadership, the hospital grew to an organization occupying most of three blocks from 98<sup>th</sup>-101<sup>st</sup> Street, a training school for nurses, a research laboratory, and an auditorium building for conferences and lectures. “The Mount Sinai Hospital Historical Exhibit in Honor of the Eightieth Birthday of George Blumenthal,” George Blumenthal records, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, New York; “Geo. Blumenthal, Museum Head, Dies.”

<sup>168</sup> “Trustees Honor Mr. George Blumenthal, Dinner Given on October the Sixth,” *The Mount Sinai Hospital Bulletin* (October 1932).

<sup>169</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

George Blumenthal's contributions also extended internationally and he was awarded the Officer of the National Order of the Legion of Honor by the French government in 1929 in recognition for his activity as patron of the arts and for his support to philanthropic organizations in France.<sup>170</sup> (See more on George Blumenthal's philanthropic contributions in France later in this chapter) These positive endorsements of Blumenthal's philanthropy and leadership role in the medical community provided a platform of respect and support among Blumenthal's peers and proved he was a man who understood the development of a scientific institution, as well as finance, banking and the business world.

Having demonstrated his leadership skills as president of Mount Sinai Hospital, George Blumenthal was considered a "natural asset" by board members of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to lead New York City's largest art museum.<sup>171</sup> George Blumenthal's service to The Metropolitan Museum of Art began in 1905 when he was elected Fellow in Perpetuity by members of the Board of Trustees in recognition of his \$5,000 gift; followed by his election as the first and only Jewish trustee in 1909; member of the executive committee in 1910; chairman of the finance committee in 1916; chairman of the executive committee in 1932; and finally, by his appointment as the seventh, and first Jewish, President in 1934, a position which he held until his death in 1941.<sup>172</sup> While George Blumenthal was a budding collector by 1905 and was already an able businessman, he may have initially bought his way in to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

At the time of his election as president, the board of trustees paid tribute to George Blumenthal's committed leadership and proven abilities to manage the institution:

Mr. Blumenthal is the seventh to hold this office since the founding of the museum in 1870...To all these positions Mr. Blumenthal has brought an

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<sup>170</sup> George and Florence Blumenthal Scrapbook, preserved in the Library of the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts (hereafter G. & F. B. Scrapbook).

<sup>171</sup> George Goodwin, "A New Jewish Elite: Curators, Directors, and Benefactors of American Art Museums, *Modern Judaism*, vol. 18, no. 1 (February 1998), p. 66.

<sup>172</sup> De Rougemont, p. 446; Goodwin, p. 66; "Geo. Blumenthal, Museum Head, Dies;" [https://archive.org/stream/jstor-3253341/3253341\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/jstor-3253341/3253341_djvu.txt).

effective service dominated by interest in all that pertains to the welfare of the museum. His service to art has been great, not only in this country but in France, from whose government he has received the order of the Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor. A distinguished amateur, notable as a collector of judgment and as one foremost in the encouragement and promotion of the arts, Mr. Blumenthal comes to the presidency with a knowledge and experience which augur well for the welfare of the museum under his leadership. The trustees have elected Mr. Blumenthal with the entire confidence that under his guidance the museum will continue to expand in usefulness.<sup>173</sup>

Despite his intellectual strengths, as well as financial and administrative skills, George Blumenthal was reluctant to accept the office of President as he did not wish to be in the forefront.<sup>174</sup> It has also been noted that, as the board's first Jewish President, George Blumenthal was keenly aware of the potential criticism from fellow trustees and potential donors should he hire an increasing number of Jewish staff.<sup>175</sup> There is conflicting information about the Board's support of Jewish staff as records also suggest that it nominated Paul Sachs as a potential candidate for director of the Museum in 1939, but Blumenthal deliberately selected a non-Jewish contender.<sup>176</sup> Despite this apparent internal sensitivity to hiring Jewish staff, and with only one Jewish seat on the board, the Museum had already received several important bequests of Old Master prints, European paintings, and tapestries, enamels, and Chinese porcelains from local Jewish collectors, including Edward Warburg, Benjamin Altman, and Michael Friedsam.<sup>177</sup> In addition to these collections, the Museum surely hoped to acquire the Blumenthal collection after his death. Beginning with the first financial gift in 1905, to the donation of architectural elements from the *Salle Gothique* in Paris for inclusion in the new Cloisters during his

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<sup>173</sup> "Geo. Blumenthal, Museum Head, Dies."

<sup>174</sup> "In Memoriam George Blumenthal, 1858-1941," p. 146.

<sup>175</sup> At the time of Blumenthal's election as president, there were two key Jewish staff members: Harry Wehle, curator of paintings; and James Rorimer, assistant curator of decorative arts, who would be named curator of medieval art and President of the Museum in 1955. Rorimer was particularly conflicted about his Jewish identity and feared revelations about his ancestry would jeopardize his leadership position. Goodwin, pp. 66-67.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, p. 67.

<sup>177</sup> Donors Benjamin Altman and Michael Friedsam both requested that their collection be displayed together at the Museum. Following Blumenthal's tenure as President, additional Jewish benefactors of the Museum included Jules Bache, Samuel Lewisohn, Robert Lehman, and Gertrude Stein. Goodwin, p. 67.

presidency, followed by the ultimate 1941 bequest of the New York house and substantial part of the collections, George and Florence Blumenthal always envisioned public access to the collection.

Despite George Blumenthal's succession as president in the midst of the Great Depression, the Metropolitan Museum experienced excellent financial conditions during his tenure as Blumenthal was known to have been one of the ablest financiers on Wall Street and a fiscal conservative.<sup>178</sup> (Figure 27 illustrates a cartoon drawing depicting George Blumenthal as the Wizard of European Securities). When Metropolitan Museum curator and interim director, Joseph Breck, wrote to Blumenthal in 1930 to solicit his support, and that of the Purchasing Committee, to acquire several works of art at upcoming European sales, Blumenthal was opposed to any new purchases and suggested only making acquisitions sparingly in the meantime as the Museum's financial situation was not yet secure.<sup>179</sup> Nonetheless, Blumenthal was often criticized for his financial stewardship of the Museum and his frequent "autocratic and secretive" behaviour and "never really let the other trustees have much to say about financial matters."<sup>180</sup>

George Blumenthal retained his chairmanship of the financial committee as president and was in charge of most of the Museum's investments himself. In addition to his expert financial skills and sound advice as chairman and president, George Blumenthal also served as a liaison in Paris on behalf of the Museum, often corresponding with dealers, auction houses, and international collectors when asked for his professional opinion on art installations overseas or potential acquisitions. In letters between curator Joseph Breck and George Blumenthal from 1929, Breck asked Blumenthal to look at a mosaic floor in the entrance hall of the National Gallery in London as a new benefactor agreed to commission the same artist to make a mosaic floor for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Subsequent letters from 1930 illustrate Blumenthal's hand-written notes in the margin stating that "the dealers have hardly any objects of first quality...[and] are

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<sup>178</sup> "Geo. Blumenthal, Museum Head, Dies;" Tomkins, p. 223.

<sup>179</sup> Joseph Breck Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives (henceforth MMA Archives), Box 7 Folder 15.

<sup>180</sup> Tomkins, p. 222.

getting more scarce all the time.”<sup>181</sup> These references illustrate how valuable and important Blumenthal’s role as benefactor, financial advisor, and art connoisseur were to the Museum.

George and Florence Blumenthal’s first combined donation to the Museum was formed in 1928 with the creation of the “George and Florence Blumenthal Fund,” comprised of a gift of \$1 million with the stipulation that the income of the fund be added to the principal until both of their deaths, at which time the trustees would have the right to dispose of both the income and the principal, with the restriction that the principal be expended for the purchase of works of art.<sup>182</sup> George Blumenthal controlled and invested the fund himself and even managed to increase it substantially during the Depression.<sup>183</sup> Following this substantial public gift from both George and Florence Blumenthal, Florence was elected benefactor of the Museum and her name was enrolled upon the plaque of Museum donors in the main hall in perpetual remembrance.<sup>184</sup>

In 1919, at the same moment that Florence and George Blumenthal were spending more time overseas, Florence Blumenthal created the American Foundation for French Art and Thought (*La Fondation Américaine pour la Pensée et l’Art Français*), a name proposed by close friend and poet, Paul Valéry, to support young, contemporary French artists.<sup>185</sup> In order to unite art, music, and literature, Florence Blumenthal assembled seven juries in the fields of literature, painting, sculpture, decorative arts, architecture, engraving, and music to select the recipients of the award and stipends. The different juries comprised the most talented specialists in each discipline, including established writers André Gide,

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<sup>181</sup> Joseph Breck Records, MMA Archives, Box 7 Folders 15-16.

<sup>182</sup> In 1941, George Blumenthal eliminated the conditions attached to the disposition of the fund established in 1928 and clarified that all of the securities and property at the time of his death shall become part of the Museum’s general endowment. MMA Archives 6274; Tomkins, p. 219.

<sup>183</sup> Tomkins, p. 219.

<sup>184</sup> “Benefactors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art 1870-1930,” *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, No. 61 (1930), p. 77.

<sup>185</sup> The Foundation has also been referred to as *La Fondation franco-américaine Florence Blumenthal*, *La Fondation américaine Blumenthal*, and *L’Association Florence Blumenthal*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prix\\_Blumenthal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prix_Blumenthal); Association Florence Blumenthal, *Premier Recueil de l’Association Florence Blumenthal* (Paris: Librairie de Paris, 1935).

Paul Valéry, Edmond Jaloux, as well as composers Gabriel Fauré, Vincent d'Indy, and Maurice Ravel.<sup>186</sup> Like many of her siblings, Florence Blumenthal embodied a similar passion for avant-garde art, music, and literature and was immersed in an artistic milieu in Paris during the 1920s.

In an effort to promote a renewed sense of prosperity and joy on the heels of World War I, the Foundation awarded young, French artists and writers with a grant or stipend, for which Florence solicited support from eminent New York financiers, such as J.P. Morgan Jr. and Edward Stettinius, as well as colleagues of her husband at Lazard Frères.<sup>187</sup> The fact that Florence solicited Morgan for a donation, reiterates both her and George's familiarity with the banker. The American Foundation for French Art and Thought also received many donations from the French state, including the President and Prime Ministers. It has been noted that rarely has any act of fundraising reunited such eminent sponsors, a testament to Florence Blumenthal's impressive talents and social network.<sup>188</sup> Between 1920-1954, one hundred seventy-eight scholarships were awarded in the seven disciplines biannually during a gathering in the Blumenthal's *Salle Gothique* on the Boulevard de Montmorency in the sixteenth district.<sup>189</sup> (See Part 2B for more information on the public function of the *Salle Gothique*)

Soon after the creation of the Foundation, the press announced the newly created stipends conceived by Florence Blumenthal, praising her generosity, efforts, and initiative,

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<sup>186</sup> Association Florence Blumenthal, "Au Lecture," *Premier Recueil de l'Association Florence Blumenthal* (Paris: Librairie de Paris, 1935).

<sup>187</sup> De Rougemont, pp. 446-447.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*; Lettre de George Blumenthal de l'Association Florence Blumenthal, 10 juin 1931, MS-FS-02-0565, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.

<sup>189</sup> As of September 1920, the address of the seat of the Foundation was 21, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, the home that the Blumenthals briefly rented upon their arrival to Paris. At some point following the Blumenthal's relocation to their new home on Boulevard Montmorency that same year, the official address of the Foundation was changed to 79 bis, rue Madame in the 6<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, however the presentation of the awards was held in the *Salle Gothique* of the Blumenthal's Montmorency residence. Lettre de George Blumenthal de l'Association Florence Blumenthal, 10 juin 1931, MS-FS-02-0565, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris; Association Florence Blumenthal, "Au Lecture," *Premier Recueil de l'Association Florence Blumenthal*; "Paul Valéry: Correspondance Générale, vol. III," *Blumenthal, Florence Meyer, Mme George*, NAF19166 Microfilm 2679, Département des Manuscrits, pp. 114-128, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

accompanied by a portrait photo.<sup>190</sup> However, the press also raised concern that the Foundation's benefits would infallibly go to those who were not necessarily the most talented, but who were protected by academic judges.<sup>191</sup>

Some artists and friends of Florence Blumenthal were also skeptical about the organization and goals of her Foundation. In a letter from the French writer and painter, Jacques Émile Blanche, to Florence Blumenthal in 1920, he requested clarification on the principal scheme, aim, and ideas of her friends and her committee and doubted her original idea as romantic.<sup>192</sup> He also defined the career of a modern, young artist, as someone who is no longer struggling and poor, as was the case before the War, but one who now exhibits all year round and has the support of his family.<sup>193</sup> Despite Blanche's contemporary skepticism and criticism of its goals, the Foundation provided a venue for Florence to contribute to French culture and to support the arts in perpetuity.

During the 1920s and 30s, Florence's brother and sister-in-law, Eugene and Agnes Meyer, made frequent trips to New York and Paris and were often in touch with the Blumenthals.<sup>194</sup> In June 1929, Agnes recounted having tea in the Blumenthal's garden in Paris in honor of the young recipients of Florence's grant and the Foundation's committee members.

Florie had a tea for all of her "boursiers" and for the committee members in her beautiful garden. The whole idea of prizes connected with art and bestowed by officialdom seems to me abhorrent. The poor young people, a nice looking, intelligent lot, stood around looking quite miserable and not knowing quite what to do...What the poor "boursiers" thought of all that affluence. I hesitate to think. I should think they would all have vowed there [and] then to starve rather than accept such charity.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Sébastien Voirol, "Livres et Auteurs," *Comoedia Illustré*, Number 1 (October 20, 1920), p. 42.

<sup>191</sup> The concern for favoritism seemed to be less of a concern for artists in the music category that offered a superior guarantee of selection. Voirol, p. 42.

<sup>192</sup> Jacques Émile Blanche, *Letters and manuscripts, 1886-1937* (861184), The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> Agnes Meyer, *The Diaries of Agnes E. Meyer, During the Years 1917-1933* (Washington D.C.: Lithographed by Batt Bates & Co., 1971), Note book no. 1.

<sup>195</sup> During the same trip, Agnes Meyer also recounts having lunch at the house of her sister-in-law, Elise de Dantas Souza, where she met the Duchess of Uzes. Agnes Meyer, Note book no. 1, May 26, 1929, entry June 12, 1929.

Agnes Meyer's unfavorable comments about her sister-in-law's Foundation portrays the Blumenthal's wealth as ostentatious and demonstrates her objection to Florence's charitable support of young artists through grants. As a patron of the arts and art collector herself, who also enjoyed close relationships with international collectors and living artists, one might assume that Agnes Meyer would have been an avid supporter of Florence's overall mission.<sup>196</sup>

It is unclear what prompted Agnes Meyer's contentious remarks, especially given her own husband's prominent wealth and status during this period. As a daughter of German immigrants and as a pioneering woman in the field of journalism, is possible that Agnes may have felt some resentment or jealousy towards Florence Blumenthal who never pursued a professional career. In 1944, Eugene and Agnes Meyer created a foundation of their own, the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, based in Washington, D.C., to support low-income people and civil rights. Similar to Florence Blumenthal, the Meyers used their connections to appoint wealthy, influential board members to support their own philanthropic causes.<sup>197</sup> The Meyer Foundation is still in existence today and continues to support political and educational causes, as well as arts institutions.<sup>198</sup>

Between May 30-June 15, 1930, just a few months before Florence Blumenthal's death, the Blumenthal Foundation presented its inaugural exhibition in Paris at the Gallery Charpentier that showcased a variety of paintings, musical compositions and manuscripts, sculpture, and decorative arts produced by those who had held scholarships.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Florence Blumenthal was not alone in her belief of awarding young artists. In 1957, Florence's sister, Elise Haas, was awarded first prize for her wooden sculpture of a Crucifix featured in "An Exhibition of Contemporary Ecclesiastical Arts" held at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. Elise Stern Haas Papers, BANC MSS 2010/533, Folder 1, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkely.

<sup>197</sup> Kevin Mooney, "The Eugene and Agnes Meyer Foundation: The real legacy of the Washington Post," *Foundation Watch* (November 2013), <https://capitalresearch.org/article/the-eugene-and-agnes-meyer-foundation-the-real-legacy-of-the-washington-post/>

<sup>198</sup> See [www.meyerfoundation.org](http://www.meyerfoundation.org).

<sup>199</sup> The Charpentier Gallery was located at 76, rue du faubourg Saint-Honoré and exhibited historic and contemporary art. Unfortunately, it is not known who presented at the inaugural



Other influential Jewish American female ambassadors of modernism and supporters of the visual arts living abroad, such as Gertrude and Sarah Stein, Claribel and Etta Cone, and Peggy Guggenheim, devoted their free time to launching new initiatives, served as unpaid members of arts organizations, hosted experimental salons, mentored lesser-known artists, and fundraised.<sup>200</sup> Artistic patronage and vibrant arts organizations, like Florence Blumenthal's Foundation, offered women an entrée into the public sphere and provided them with a venue for shaping culture.<sup>201</sup> Florence Blumenthal's ability to launch a new initiative and unite the leading artistic talents of the day to support contemporary French artists illustrates that a Jewish American woman (albeit half French) was most certainly accepted and championed in France during this time.

Florence Blumenthal's involvement with philanthropic activities and charitable work in France is consistent with contemporary bourgeois women's roles during the first quarter of the twentieth century, however French Jewish women, in particular, focused primarily on establishing new organizations related to Zionism and other Jewish causes rather than the arts.<sup>202</sup> World War I prompted a new wave of voluntary activity, foundations, and charities, expanding women's horizons, affirming their philanthropic role, and leading to their involvement in political issues.<sup>203</sup> Much has been written about the concept of separate spheres for women and men in America and how from the confining private sphere of domesticity, women created and ran their own organizations, established themselves as capable fundraisers, staunch advocates, dedicated volunteers and leaders,

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exhibition in 1930. Emmanuel Honegger, "Georges Migot, président de l'Association Florence Blumenthal, l'exposition de 1930," p. 2.

<sup>200</sup> Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 135; Jill Fields, "Was Peggy Guggenheim Jewish? Art Collecting and Representations of Jewish Identity In and Out of Postwar Venice," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, Number 25, Fall 5774/2013 (Indiana University Press), p. 62.

<sup>201</sup> Macleod, p. 220.

<sup>202</sup> Paula E Hyman. "France, Modern," *Jewish Women's Archive: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* (1 March 2009). Jewish Women's Archive (Viewed on June 10, 2018) <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/france-modern>.

<sup>203</sup> Carol Harris, "1914-1918: How charities helped to win WWI," *Third Sector* (June 27, 2014), <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/1914-1918-charities-helped-win-ww1/volunteering/article/1299786>

powerful forces for social change, and tireless workers for many causes.<sup>204</sup> Florence Blumenthal's creation of a new Foundation was a means of establishing her own identity, independent from her husband. (See Part 3 for more information on the Blumenthal's collecting identity)

The role of female collecting during the early twentieth century served as a liberating vehicle that enabled women to move away from the narrowly defined spaces of the luxurious interiors of the Gilded Age toward wide-open exterior spaces marked by the fresher possibilities of civic involvement.<sup>205</sup> Until the late nineteenth century, the law of coverture placed a woman's property and belongings under her husband's custody.<sup>206</sup> While the Married Women's Property Act was passed by some U.S. states beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, and substantially modified coverture in Britain in 1882, certain aspects survived in America until the 1960s.<sup>207</sup> As Dianne Sachko Macleod has argued, collecting and consumerism prompted increased female self-expression, individualism, confidence, and the ability to network outside the home amidst an otherwise confining environment.<sup>208</sup> The fact that both of the Blumenthal's French properties were in Florence's name suggests that she would not have been affected by these previous restrictions, however her Foundation likely provided an identity and social network apart from George. (See Part 2B for more information on the Blumenthal's residences in France)

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<sup>204</sup> "A Sense of Place: A Short History of Women's Philanthropy in America," The Women's Philanthropy Institute at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University (March 2010), pp.1-2, <https://www.cfgnh.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Public/A-Sense-of-Place-FINAL.pdf>. For more references on this subject, see Jill Conway, "Women Reformers and American Culture, 1870-1930," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 5 (1971), pp. 164-177; Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 75, No. 1 (June 1988), pp. 9-39; Kathleen D. McCarthy (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); and Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's culture: American philanthropy and art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>205</sup> Macleod, p. 5.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>207</sup> Law Library of Congress, [https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/property\\_law.html](https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/property_law.html); "Married Women's Property Act 1882," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Married\\_Women%27s\\_Property\\_Act\\_1882](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Married_Women%27s_Property_Act_1882).

<sup>208</sup> Macleod, pp. 11, 92.

Parallel to their philanthropic support of French artists and art organizations in both America and in France, George and Florence Blumenthal also made many large donations, both separately and as a couple, to medical, educational, and cultural institutions in France. Between the years 1921-1928, George and Florence Blumenthal donated over 200,000 francs to the American Hospital of Paris, designating a “George and Florence Blumenthal Room” in 1924.<sup>209</sup> The Blumenthals developed a pattern of designating a separate space, wing, or auditorium, as they did for Mount Sinai in New York a few years earlier, perhaps foreshadowing the Blumenthal Bequest and the creation of the “Blumenthal Patio” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>210</sup>

In 1923, George Blumenthal presented the University of Paris, or the Sorbonne, with a gift of \$250,000 francs to be used in the interests of science and art.<sup>211</sup> In 1924, he made a gift of \$250,000 francs to the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, followed by a second gift to the Sorbonne in 1925 of \$1 million francs (also to be shared between the Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of Sciences), and in 1926, a gift of 336,000 francs to the Necker Children’s Hospital to build a modern clinic dedicated to Otorhinolaryngology under the direction of Professor Jacques Le Mée who treated George and Florence’s deceased son.<sup>212</sup> (Figure 28a-d illustrates George and Florence Blumenthal’s involvement and financial support at Necker Children’s Hospital, Paris) The fact that donations to French museums were still considered a new phenomenon suggests that these types of gifts to French hospitals and universities were not typical and relatively rare. (The tradition of making donations to French museums is discussed in more detail later in this chapter)

In 1927, Florence Blumenthal made a donation to the Bibliothèque National de France for the installation of electric lighting, hanging of chandeliers, cleaning of walls,

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<sup>209</sup> Annual reports, American Hospital of Paris provided through email correspondence with Rebecca Allaire, April 3, 2015.

<sup>210</sup> George Blumenthal records, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

<sup>211</sup> *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 3282 (Nov. 24, 1923), p. 1011.

<sup>212</sup> G. & F. B. Scrapbook; Pierre-Christian Tattinger, “Florence Blumenthal, 1873-1930, Une Présence Américaine à Paris,” *Bulletin de la Société Historique d’Auteuil et de Passy*, v. XVIII, no. 146 (2001), p. 9.

restoration of mural paintings, and installation of hangings in the Salle Mazarine.<sup>213</sup> (Figure 29 illustrates a donor plaque in the Mazarine Gallery at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris honoring Florence Blumenthal's donation). The Blumenthals were also benefactors and committee members of the Association France-Amériques, founded in 1909 to promote the relations between France and America.<sup>214</sup>

Between 1929-1934, George and Florence Blumenthal made a series of gifts of works of art to the Louvre Museum. The first was a gift of a Louis XV armchair made by Michel Gourdin and covered in Savonnerie upholstery.<sup>215</sup> (See Figure 30) Records indicate that George and Florence Blumenthal acquired this chair from their friend and art dealer, Jacques Seligmann, with the purpose of donating it to the Louvre, illustrating an example of an acquisition with the public in mind.<sup>216</sup>

George Blumenthal continued to support French institutions following Florence's death. In 1931 in Florence's honor, he donated a Chinese-style Art Deco clock (known as the "screen model") decorated with white jade, coral, onyx, emeralds, sapphires, enamelled gold, mother-of-pearl, and diamonds, made by Maurice Couët for Cartier Paris stock in 1927, to the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, today the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.<sup>217</sup> (See Figure 31) According to records, the clock was sold to George Blumenthal on May

<sup>213</sup> Aménagement de la Galerie Mazarine en Salle d'exposition, 2011/001/10692, 1926-1927, Archives Administratives de la Bibliothèque nationale, Département Manuscrits.

<sup>214</sup> Florence Blumenthal's acceptance to the committee in 1926 was published in the Parisian newspaper, *Le Gaulois* (July 22, 1926), p. 2. A plaque located in the Hôtel France Amériques, the former Hôtel Le Marois on Avenue Franklin Roosevelt in Paris that serves as the Association's headquarters, commemorates the Blumenthal's generosity, alongside other benefactors, including Lazard Frères Bank.

<sup>215</sup> Object record for OA 8093, Objects Department, Louvre Museum, Paris; Musée du Louvre, France, *Les donateurs du Louvre* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1989), p. 152.

<sup>216</sup> The chair was previously part of the collection of Philippe Alexandre Wiener (1851-1928) whose sons had donated a piece of French furniture from their father's collection to the Louvre that same year. Perhaps the Blumenthals knew Wiener and his collection in Paris and consciously reunited pieces of the collection for public display. Object record for OA 8093, Objects Department, Louvre Museum, Paris.

<sup>217</sup> Letter from President of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs to George Blumenthal, June 11, 1931, G. & F. B. Scrapbook; Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (inv. 27898), <http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/musees/musee-des-arts-decoratifs/parcours/art-nouveau-art-deco/une-salle-a-manger-par-louis-sue/pendule>.

14, 1928.<sup>218</sup> Interestingly, Florence Blumenthal acquired a second clock made by Couët for Cartier New York in 1927, known both as the “Egyptian Striking Clock” and “Temple Gate Clock,” just one year later in 1929.<sup>219</sup> (See Figure 32) One of the most spectacular of all of Cartier’s works in the Egyptian Revival style, it is based on the Temple of Khonsu in Karnak and is made of gold, silver-gilt, mother-of-pearl, coral, emeralds, cornelian, enamel, lapis lazuli, and enamel.<sup>220</sup> The Blumenthals were avid clients of Cartier and Florence Blumenthal, in particular, was especially fond of Cartier’s Egyptian revival designs. In addition to clocks, she owned several smaller Cartier accessories, including a vanity case in the form of a door to an Egyptian temple from 1924, and a sarcophagus-form vanity case from 1925 mounted with an ancient bone lid, adding to its appeal and illustrating Florence’s taste for contemporary Art Deco design.<sup>221</sup>

In 1932, the year of the first Blumenthal collection sale (discussed in more detail in Part 3), and in honor of the institution’s fiftieth anniversary, George Blumenthal made a donation to the Ecole du Louvre.<sup>222</sup> That same year, the municipality of Paris honored the memory of philanthropist Florence Blumenthal by naming a street in the fashionable sixteenth arrondissement in her name that still exists today.<sup>223</sup> (See Figure 33) Although it is common for Paris streets to be named for famous men, approximately 2.3% are named for women, roughly one hundred sixty names in total, and fewer are honored for their own intelligence, bravery, or mark on history without their husbands.<sup>224</sup> Therefore, it is quite rare and a real testament that a street is named after Florence.

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<sup>218</sup> Judy Rudoe, *Cartier, 1900-1939* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1997), p. 193.

<sup>219</sup> “Design Retrospective: Cartier and the Egyptian Revival Style,” (September 29, 2010), <http://forums.timezone.com/index.php?t=tree&goto=5293364&rid=0>; “Important Jewels,” Christie’s New York, April 24, 1991, lot 303.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Sarah D. Coffin and Stephen Harrison, *The Jazz Age, American Style in the 1920s* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2017), pp. 16-17.

<sup>222</sup> “Mrs. Blumenthal Cited by France For Charity, Dies,” *Herald Tribune*, September 22, 1930.

<sup>223</sup> Rue Florence Blumenthal begins at 30, 34 Avenue de Versailles and ends at 9, rue Félicien-David, measuring 7 meters long and 15 meters wide. Jacques Hillairet, *Dictionnaire Historique des Rues de Paris* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1985), p. 532; “Paris Names Street for Florence Blumenthal, Wife of Noted Jewish Philanthropist,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 23, 1932.

<sup>224</sup> Emma Cueto, “Feminists ‘Rename’ Paris Streets After Women In Order To Draw Attention To Inequality In Street Names,” *Bustle* (August 28, 2015),

The same year, George Blumenthal also donated three Medieval and Renaissance sculptures (in both George and Florence's name) from the Blumenthal's *Salle Gothique* in Paris to the Louvre Museum (Figures 34a-c), followed by a gift to the Louvre in 1934 of a fifteenth-century stone door (classified *Monument Historique*), originally from l'hôtel d'Effiat and acquired by the Blumenthals for integration into the exterior architecture of their Gothic room in Paris.<sup>225</sup> (See Figure 35 and Part 2B for more information on this door and the Blumenthal's Gothic room)

The tradition of making donations to French museums, like the Louvre, which, since its inception, has always symbolized France's national artistic heritage, continues to be regarded as an act of patriotism.<sup>226</sup> The collectors and donors of the Louvre have traditionally represented an elite class of men, even though there have been a select group of important female collectors.<sup>227</sup> In a general study of donations in France between 1800 and 1940, the gift to the museum has been summarized as "a new phenomenon characterised [sic] by the militant positivist intentions of its benefactors...proportionately to other public institutions in the nineteenth century, it was the museum that had most benefited from generosity of private citizens."<sup>228</sup>

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<https://www.bustle.com/articles/107190-feminists-rename-paris-streets-after-women-in-order-to-draw-attention-to-inequality-in-street-names>.

<sup>225</sup> George and Florence Blumenthal are listed among the published donors of the Louvre Museum. In July 1934, George Blumenthal wrote to Henri Verne, Director of the French National Museums, offering the stone door from Effiat and stating that if the Louvre Museum did not accept the donation, Verne would be obliged to de-classify it so that it could be exported to New York and offered to The Metropolitan Museum of Art instead. Object records for RF 2201-2203, RF 2389, Sculpture Department, Louvre Museum, Paris; Musée du Louvre, France, *Les donateurs du Louvre* (Paris: Edition de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1989), p. 152. In 1932, the Louvre Museum would also purchase a selection of decorative arts at the Blumenthal sale at Galerie Georges Petit (see Part 2B).

<sup>226</sup> Véronique Long, "Les collectionneurs d'oeuvres d'art et la donation au musée à la fin du XIXe siècle: l'exemple du musée du Louvre," *Romantisme* (2001), n. 112, pp. 45, 47.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>228</sup> Felicity Bodenstein, "A Show of Generosity: Donations and the Intimacy of Display in the 'Cabinet des médailles et antiques' in Paris from 1830 to 1930 in Kate Hill ed., *Museum and Biographies: Stories, Objects, Identities*, vol. 9 (Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 2012), p. 16.

Despite a rise in donations of works of art to the Louvre at the end of the nineteenth century until World War I, very few foreign collectors during this period bequeathed works of art to European museums.<sup>229</sup> The Blumenthals proved to be a unique exception. The Blumenthal donation to the Louvre also occurred at a time when larger, personal donations were becoming increasingly rare, as well as patronage in general. This is evident by the formation in 1897 of the *Société d'amis*, an independent association of male benefactors, to help enrich the collections of the Louvre, acquire works of art, and make donations.<sup>230</sup> This private initiative to supplement the insufficient resources allotted by the state followed the model of the National Gallery in London and museums in Berlin.

In recognition of their charitable work in France, both George and Florence were awarded the Legion of Honor. In 1922, Florence was awarded the Legion of Honor, followed by her promotion to Officer of the National Order of the Legion of Honor in 1929 for recognition of her contributions to French cultural life.<sup>231</sup> Florence was also a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society of the French Legion of Honor, based in New York, and elected director of the Society in 1929.<sup>232</sup> In 1926, George Blumenthal was awarded the Legion of Honor, then, together with Florence, was promoted to Officer in 1929 for his activity as patron of the arts and for his support to philanthropic organizations.<sup>233</sup> (See Fig. 36)

Following Florence's death in 1930 and the sale of both French properties, George Blumenthal continued to spend time in France with his second wife, Mary Ann Payne

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<sup>229</sup> Long, pp. 50, 52.

<sup>230</sup> Bodenstein, p. 17.

<sup>231</sup> "Florence Meyer Blumenthal, 1875-1930," <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/blumenthal-florence-meyer> (accessed February 28, 2017); "Mrs. Blumenthal, Art Patron Dead," *The New York Times* (September 22, 1930).

<sup>232</sup> "Memoriam to Florence Blumenthal from the American Society of the French Legion of Honor, Inc.," G. & F. B. Scrapbook; *Légion d'Honneur*, vol. 1, no. 3, (January 1931), (New York: American Society of the French Legion of Honor, 1931).

<sup>233</sup> G. & F. B. Scrapbook. The Blumenthals are unfortunately not listed in the Legion of Honor records in the Léonore database in the National Archives, Paris likely because it has been less than one hundred years since the presentation of their award.



Clews, and support several American charities and organizations.<sup>234</sup> (More information on Mary Ann Blumenthal will be discussed in Part 3) These included New York University's graduate school, where he donated twenty-one fine art fellowships in 1936, one year after receiving an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree in recognition of his professional achievements, the New York Public Library, where he donated a valuable collection of original editions of works by French authors in 1937, and that same year, a donation of 12,000 francs to the administration of the French National Museums to create a course focused on contemporary art in Europe and North America.<sup>235</sup> The fact that George Blumenthal continued to support a number of charities in his own name suggests that he was strongly invested in philanthropy and continued his outreach to new institutions. Perhaps Mary Ann's influence, similar to Florence, helped contribute to these new causes.

### A Collecting Partnership

In contrast to George Blumenthal, Florence Meyer was born into a wealthy, established family in Los Angeles and brought money and a collecting tradition into her marriage. The fact that there is no evidence that either inherited any art suggests that their collection was formed together as a couple. Their common passion was most likely heightened following the death of their only child that may have encouraged and prompted an interest in collecting through which their bequests and donations to museums served as methods of perpetuating their legacy.

The Blumenthals devoted themselves to their collection and philanthropic causes, commissioning a number of impressive houses filled with important art treasures, and spending increasing amounts of time overseas. It has been noted that the decorating of the Blumenthal's three homes was Florence's favourite distraction, perhaps from the grief

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<sup>234</sup> <http://research.frick.org/directoryweb/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=6935>; "Geo. Blumenthal, Museum Head, Dies;" Arthur R. Blumenthal, pp. 9-10.

<sup>235</sup> "Geo. Blumenthal, Museum Head, Dies;" "French Collection is Given to Library, Original Editions of Works of Anatole France and Others Donated by Blumenthal," *The New York Times* (August 2, 1937); Arthur R. Blumenthal, pp. 9-10.



over the loss of her son.<sup>236</sup> According to the memoir of dealer and close acquaintance of the Blumenthals, Germain Seligman, “the shock of [their son’s] death, added to the knowledge that she could never bear another child, left Mrs. Blumenthal in such despair that every means was employed to create new interests for her. Chief among them was travel, with long stays in Italy and France.”<sup>237</sup>

As Dianne Sachko Macleod has previously noted, many married couples who tragically experienced the loss of a child often turn to “a kind of inter-subjectivity centered on art collecting that [brings] them shared pleasure; the simultaneous desire for loss of self and for wholeness (or oneness) with the other in a close relationship.”<sup>238</sup> Similarly, Barbara Lasic argues that many bequests to public institutions stem from a lasting desire to attach one’s name to a collection as a way to fill a missing gap, perhaps after the loss of a child.<sup>239</sup>

Like the Blumenthals, female patron and collector Isabella Stewart Gardner of Boston initially turned to collecting as a form of solace and escape following the death of her two-year-old son. As Macleod describes, “collecting offered [Gardner] a space of psychic repose where she could lose herself in fantasy and channel her formidable energy into creative self-expression.”<sup>240</sup>

In prior literature about the history of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, it has been reported that George Blumenthal took Florence to Europe following the death of their son and encouraged her to study art history.<sup>241</sup> It was during this time that they met American art historian, Bernard Berenson, who aided the Blumenthals in their education and formation of taste for Italian art, which would soon become a central focus of their

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<sup>236</sup> Narell, p. 361.

<sup>237</sup> Arthur R. Blumenthal, p. 3; Germain Seligman, p. 144.

<sup>238</sup> Macleod, p. 74.

<sup>239</sup> Barbara Lasic, “Splendid Patriotism, Richard Wallace and the construction of the Wallace Collection,” *Journal of the History of Collections* vol. 21, no. 2 (2009), pp. 173-182.

<sup>240</sup> Macleod, p. 89.

<sup>241</sup> It has also been reported that, at the time of the Blumenthal’s encounter with Berenson overseas, Florence Blumenthal already knew Berenson’s pupil and patron, Isabella Stewart Gardner, and was influenced by her Italian palace in Boston. Tomkins, p. 220.

collection, and from whom they purchased a number of Italian paintings.<sup>242</sup> Berenson was known as the leading connoisseur of his time and argued that the “scientific deduction of the connoisseur,” based on intensive training, was the most trustworthy method of analyzing old master paintings.<sup>243</sup>

In a letter from New York dated January 1909, Berenson’s wife, Mary, wrote a letter to her family following a visit to George Blumenthal, identifying him as “the man who bought our Lotto, which...looks perfectly gorgeous in a big green room.”<sup>244</sup> Based on the date of this letter and their purchase of the painting in 1906, we know that the Blumenthals were clients of the Berensons during the early years of their collecting and before the construction of their principal Park Avenue residence that began in 1911.

Although there are no known surviving interior photographs of the Blumenthal’s earlier residences, the painting purchased from Berenson is visible, however, in the velvet-walled drawing room on the second floor of their Park Avenue residence. (See Fig. 57b and Part 2A for more information on the Blumenthal’s New York residences) In addition, Mary Berenson alludes to George Blumenthal as perhaps the driving force behind the couple’s impetus to collect and that he was the true connoisseur. This was an understandable perception as the role of women in the culture of connoisseurship and in the art world was not fully contextualized or appreciated during this period.<sup>245</sup> As Meaghan Clarke and Francesco Ventrella have argued, women, alongside men, were, however, equally involved in the development of art history throughout the nineteenth century and their dual expertise became a conduit for social mobility for both sexes. They also argue that women’s role in the culture of connoisseurship was

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid*; Carl Brandon Strehlke and Machtelt Brüggén Israëls, The Bernard and Mary Berenson Collection of European Paintings at I Tatti (Florence: Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 2015), pp. 756; 759.

<sup>243</sup> Flaminia Gennari Santori, *The Melancholy of Masterpieces, Old Master Paintings in America 1900-1914* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2003), p. 125.

<sup>244</sup> Strehlke and Israëls, p. 756.

<sup>245</sup> Meaghan Clarke & Francesco Ventrella (2017) “Women’s Expertise and the Culture of Connoisseurship,” *Visual Resources*, 33: 1-2, 1-10, DOI: 10.1080/01973762.2017.1308623, p. 1. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01973762.2017.1308623>

not secondary to that of men's.<sup>246</sup> While the perception of Florence's secondary role continues to endure today since she died prematurely, without any surviving direct descendants, and George Blumenthal is the sole name attached to the 1941 bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Florence was extremely involved in the early years of the couple's collecting.

It is undeniable that George Blumenthal had a passion for art and was surrounded by other prominent art collectors in New York, both in his professional and social circles.<sup>247</sup> In prior literature about the history of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, it has been noted that George Blumenthal was the type of collector who responded to works of art with an attractive tactile quality, rather than purely for their visual or scholarly significance and, as a result, that he preferred small, carved objects, such as ivories, enamels, bronzes, jewels, and woodcarvings over paintings.<sup>248</sup> For George Blumenthal, collecting was a personal adventure and, unlike many collectors, "he enjoyed each step in the chase, from discovery, through bargaining, to eventual possession. Like so many of the most successful collectors he was intuitive rather than learned...he had very knowing, very discriminating, and long remembering hands."<sup>249</sup> This description of Blumenthal was published by the curator of prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in a foreword to the special exhibition catalogue celebrating the bequest and the arrival of the Blumenthal collection the Museum. His emphasis on George Blumenthal's hands is a flattering homage and one that provides the collection some caché in promotion of the exhibition.

It has also been noted that George Blumenthal began buying works of art as a young man

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4, 6-7.

<sup>247</sup> George Blumenthal was one of the founding patrons of the Lotus Magazine Foundation, an organization that supported the American art magazine first published in New York in 1910, along with other prominent New York collectors, such as J. Pierpont Morgan, Archer M. Huntington, Otto H. Kahn, Henry Clay Frick, and Henry E. Huntington. See *The Lotus Magazine*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Oct. 1917). The magazine was renamed *Art & Life* in 1919 before terminating in 1920 after its absorption by *Art & Archaeology*.

<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=lotusmag>

<sup>248</sup> Tomkins, p. 221.

<sup>249</sup> W.M. Ivins, Jr., "George Blumenthal as Connoisseur," *Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal, A Special Exhibition* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943).

and the hunt for artwork became one of his principal pleasures.<sup>250</sup> Perhaps it was the representation of George Blumenthal's self-taught expertise, lack of formal training, and dependability on his tactile senses that gave the collection a unique quality. While perhaps subjective, scholars have also remarked that the Blumenthal collection embodied true 'connoisseurship,' a particularly rare quality that is only achieved when using all of the senses to buy art.<sup>251</sup> Others have remarked that George Blumenthal was "a last surviving practitioner of what might be called the princely tradition of collecting."<sup>252</sup>

George Blumenthal's self-taught "expertise" is in accord with the beliefs of Italian art critic and art historian, Giovanni Morelli (1816-1891), who insisted that connoisseurs of art should train in galleries, not libraries, and use intuition and one's eye to assess works of art."<sup>253</sup> This notion of democratic connoisseurship in the twentieth century also supports the theory of Constance Jocelyn Ffoulkes (1858-1950), a disciple of Morelli and art critic at the turn of the twentieth century, who argued that one is not born a connoisseur, but becomes one.<sup>254</sup> George Blumenthal became a collector through an introduction to private collections belonging to wealthy Lazard colleagues and role models in New York and Europe, long periods of travels overseas, and through his involvement with the board of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

However, by the time of George Blumenthal's election as president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1934, his interest in collecting art had waned and, as a result of Florence's death, he concentrated on the liquidation of the properties and collection both in Paris and Grasse and donated architectural elements to French and American museums, reinforcing the idea that their collection had been a joint enterprise and was ultimately destined for public engagement.<sup>255</sup> (See Part 2B for more information on the Blumenthal's residences in France)

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> Tomkins, pp. 221-222.

<sup>252</sup> Arthur R. Blumenthal, p. 1.

<sup>253</sup> Francesco Ventrella, "Constance Jocelyn Ffoulkes and the Modernization of Scientific Connoisseurship, *Visual Resources*, volume 33, number 1, 2017, p. 3.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>255</sup> Tomkins, p. 222.

Florence was an active collector during her lifetime, and according to close friends, exuded perhaps more confidence and better judgment of works of art than her husband.<sup>256</sup> Many family members, dealers, and contemporaries of the Blumenthals also observed that it was Florence's taste, eye, and knowledge of art that guided the formation of the Blumenthal's collection. Florence's brother, Eugene Meyer Jr., spoke very candidly about his sister's leading role in the collection during an interview in the 1950s:

My sister had the taste and she really had a great collection of early Italian and early French art. It was renaissance art. They built a very beautiful house on Park Avenue. The interior was Italian renaissance. There was a renaissance patio, which was brought over from Spain in its entirety. George was like J.P. Morgan and Henry Clay Frick and all of those people who had a lot of money and tried to make themselves important by art collection under the guidance of crooked dealers. But my sister had real taste. He tried to, but he really didn't know anything about art.<sup>257</sup>

Few testimonials survive that as clearly pinpoint Florence's primary role as the tastemaker and the true proprietor of the Blumenthal's art collection. It also illustrates Eugene Meyer Jr.'s somewhat biased view of wealthy financiers and industrialists, like his brother-in-law, who presumably all rely on untrustworthy dealers and don't know about the art they collect. While this statement is very useful in highlighting Florence's important role in the formation of the couple's collection, it also undermines George Blumenthal's philanthropy and generosity and, like Morgan, his leadership role at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Meyer's statement also infers that the two men may not have gotten along.

By 1919, following the completion of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue mansion, Florence Blumenthal was considered by the press to be "one of the best known and most fastidious of collectors of art objects and a recognized connoisseur of French Gothic Art."<sup>258</sup> She also often frequented salons in Paris, likely in connection with her Foundation, and was not afraid to visit an artist's studio after finding a work she liked.<sup>259</sup> Florence no doubt

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<sup>256</sup> De Rougemont, p. 446.

<sup>257</sup> "Eugene Meyer, Interviews, January 6, 1952-May 6," 1952, Columbia University Oral History Research Office, p. 69, in Agnes Elizabeth Ernst Meyer Papers, Box 169, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>258</sup> Arthur R. Blumenthal, p. 5.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*

possessed a breadth of artistic interests, from Medieval to contemporary, and her wide-ranging interest in diverse periods of art was noted by her friends who referred to her as a “*collectionneuse éclairée*,” or enlightened collector.<sup>260</sup> This reference is perhaps a response to the prejudiced assumption concurrent at this time that women had taste, but could not have a “good eye.”<sup>261</sup>

The international dealer to many newly wealthy collectors of the Gilded Age, Sir Joseph Duveen, also complimented Florence Blumenthal’s taste during their early correspondence in 1919, perhaps in an effort to flatter a potential lucrative client:

I know so well what you like, and am conscious enough (if I may say so!) to think that I can gauge your taste as well as anyone.”<sup>262</sup>

In subsequent correspondence from Duveen to George Blumenthal in October 1931, one month following Florence’s death, Duveen thanked him for sending the additional two volumes of the Blumenthal collection catalogue (see Part 3 for more information on the Blumenthal catalogue publication), and credited both George and Florence for their combined skill in amassing their impressive collection:

I cannot help reflecting upon the great joy its gradual building up must have given you and your dear wife. I suppose that you are yourself sometimes surprised at its completeness and perfection. Only by reviewing it as recorded in these beautiful volumes can one really gauge its extent and importance, the result of your combined taste and judgment.”<sup>263</sup>

While perhaps meant to flatter the ego of the collector, Duveen’s reference to the Blumenthal’s “combined taste and judgment” is consistent with the idea that collections have long been regarded as reflections of the individuals who assemble them and also touches on questions of value that extend outside the scope of the collection, reflecting an

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<sup>260</sup> De Rougemont, p. 446.

<sup>261</sup> Ventrella, p. 2.

<sup>262</sup> Duveen Brothers Records MF466, Box 353, Folder 8, Reel #208, “Papers regarding scouts, dealers, restorers, and collectors 1910-1965, Mrs. George Blumenthal 1916-1941,” Institut national d’histoire de l’art, Paris.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

individual's judgment and taste more generally.<sup>264</sup>

Compared to other collecting contemporaries, such as J.P. Morgan, Henry Clay Frick, and Marjorie Merriweather Post, the Blumenthals were not avid clients of Joseph Duveen and harboured feelings of distrust.<sup>265</sup> Despite ongoing correspondence with Duveen between 1916-1935, the Blumenthals only acquired a few select objects from the dealer's stock, including seven pieces of maiolica, and had very little to do with the Duveen firm in general.<sup>266</sup> In the early 1930s, however, Duveen was in touch with George Blumenthal to arrange a visit to his Park Avenue home on behalf of the collector and politician, Sir Alfred Beit, and also served as the liaison for George Blumenthal to facilitate the loan of his tapestry to the Universal and International Exposition of Brussels in 1935.<sup>267</sup> Out of admiration for the collection, or perhaps because he had another client in mind, Duveen purchased three Sèvres porcelain vases from the Blumenthal sale in 1932.<sup>268</sup> The Blumenthals also ultimately became loyal clients and advisees of Bernard Berenson's competitor, Frederick Mason Perkins, from whom they purchased several Italian primitive paintings.<sup>269</sup> The fact that the Blumenthals were ultimately not long-term clients of business associates, Duveen and Berenson, suggests that there may have been some disagreement about purchases or attributions, as was often the case.

The Blumenthal's close friend and art dealer, Jacques Seligmann, also had a particular distrust of Duveen that may have influenced the couple's opinion of the dealer.<sup>270</sup> Seligmann, perhaps with a similar intent to flatter the ego of the collector, celebrated George Blumenthal as "superior to the generality of (American) connoisseurs," adding:

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<sup>264</sup> Matthew James Vechinski, "Collecting, Curating, and the Magic Circle of Ownership in a Postmaterial Culture," in Kevin M. Moist and David Banash eds., *Contemporary Collecting: Objects, Practices, and the Fate of Things* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), p. 13.

<sup>265</sup> Duveen Brothers Records.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid*; Cleland, p. 154.

<sup>267</sup> Duveen Brothers Records.

<sup>268</sup> The whereabouts of the three Sèvres vases are currently unknown. Duveen Brothers Records.

<sup>269</sup> Notes from discussion with Fausto Nicolai, Mellon Fellow, Lehman Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, December 2, 2016.

<sup>270</sup> Cleland, p. 154.

[T]here 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.”<sup>271</sup>

### Positioning through Portraiture

Throughout the course of George and Florence Blumenthal’s marriage, the couple used portraiture and their close relationship with contemporary artists as a means to self-fashion and promote their identity in the art and philanthropic communities. By examining a number of representations of George and Florence in paintings and sculpture, both as young adults and later in life, it would appear that they, like many other rich Americans during the Gilded Age and early twentieth century, strove to establish themselves through the “dignified images according to the model provided by European portrait galleries.”<sup>272</sup>

Throughout her life, Florence Blumenthal was described as a woman of exquisite taste and someone with a tremendous passion for clothes and fashion. As a young woman, she was often described by family and friends as having “fine traits,” “a perfect figure,” “an attractive oval face,” “brown wavy hair,” “dark eyes,” and “elegant hands, feet, wrists, and ankles.”<sup>273</sup> In a letter to her siblings in 1884, when Florence was only eleven years old, she already displayed an interest in fashion and expressed her preference for ready-made corsets over ones made to order which, in her opinion, were always too small and could not be worn for more than two months.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> *Ibid*, p. 155.

<sup>272</sup> Michaël Vottero, ‘To Collect and Conquer: American Collections in the Gilded Age,’ *Transatlantica* [online], 1 | 2013, February 14, 2014, consulted May 12, 2018, <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/6492>

<sup>273</sup> Boni de Castellane, *Mémoires, 1867-1932* (Paris: Perrin, 1986), p. 458; Graham, p. 8; André Thérive, “La Fondation Américaine pour la Pensée et l’Art Français,” Preface to *Premier recueil de l’Association Florence Blumenthal* (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie., 1935), p. 3; Narell, p. 360.

<sup>274</sup> Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, BANC MSS 2010/604, Carton 1, folder 7, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



Popular authors during the Victorian period consistently described female heroines as “pretty,” “small,” “delicate,” “graceful,” and “demure.”<sup>275</sup> Prized female traits and fashion trends changed in far-reaching ways during the late nineteenth century Victorian era and into the Gilded Age. The predilection for the tight-waist corset of the Victorian era became more flexible and elastic as women’s interest in outdoor activities increased and health concerns about tight-laced corsets grew.<sup>276</sup> The concept of the “New Woman” that developed during the late nineteenth century also provided women with different characteristics and increased freedoms, including an economic and civic identity, right to higher education, and sexual liberation.<sup>277</sup> Florence Blumenthal was part of the generation of women who experienced this social and physical evolution first-hand, and embodied elements of the “New Woman” by embracing new fashions, international travel, and the creation of her own foundation.

Because the Blumenthals divided their time between winters in New York and summers in France, Florence often transported immense quantities of French clothing to America every year, frequently uncovering that full trunks of clothes had never been unpacked from previous trips.<sup>278</sup> George Blumenthal undoubtedly supported Florence’s taste and expenditure on clothing as evidence by his remark to Florence’s brother, Eugene Meyer, when questioned about his sister’s extravagant taste in clothes: “Eugene, you don’t expect your wife to wear the same dress twice, do you?”<sup>279</sup> This form of conspicuous consumption was typical behaviour among the elite class during the Gilded Age when spending, primarily among newly wealthy families, was intended solely to achieve status

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<sup>275</sup> R.S. Fleming, “Victorian Feminine Ideal; about the perfect silhouette, hygiene, grooming, & body sculpting,” published online (October 2, 2013), <http://www.katetattersall.com/victorian-feminine-ideal-the-perfect-silhouette-hygiene-grooming-body-sculpting/>

<sup>276</sup> Mel Davies, “Corsets and Conception: Fashion and Demographic Trends in the Nineteenth Century,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (October, 1982), pp. 611-641.

<sup>277</sup> Susan M. Cruea, “Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement,” *Bowling Green State University General Studies Writing Faculty Publications*, (September 2005), pp. 200-201.

<sup>278</sup> Graham, p. 8.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

and recognition.<sup>280</sup> This reference to Florence's interest in clothes highlights her interest in fashion that she would later use to promote her identity.<sup>281</sup>

Throughout adulthood, Florence's elegant traits were put on show and her good looks were apparently well known.<sup>282</sup> Two portraits of Florence Blumenthal by the renowned Gilded Age Italian portraitist active in Paris, Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931), likely commissioned by Florence herself, highlight her attractive physique and sophisticated taste for fashion. By controlling the likeness represented in a portrait as a reflection of identity manifests Florence's desire to record of her presence and demonstrates a self-awareness and creative consciousness. The image of herself as an attractive, fashionable woman relates to the various identities one associates with Florence Blumenthal, such as cultured, fashionable, influential, and modern. Many fashionable members of society during the Gilded Age in London and Paris commissioned portraits from Boldini. As in the case with the American artist John Singer Sargent, these society portraits were a symbol of rank, position, and class.<sup>283</sup> While the notion of self was in flux at the end of the nineteenth century and a new fascination with individuality emerged, portraiture remained a means to evoke power.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Christine Page, "A History of Conspicuous Consumption," *Meaning, Measure, and Morality of Materialism* (1992), pp. 82-87. Online publication <http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/12197/volumes/sv08/SV-08>

<sup>281</sup> The subject of fashion and accessories between George and Eugene would come up again in 1937 when Eugene asked George's advice about selling a friend's pearl necklace. George responded that pearls are harder to dispose of than precious stones since women are satisfied to wear imitations ones and suggested contacting Cartier. This exchange demonstrates Eugene's respect for George's opinion on luxury goods and illustrates his experience as a long-time client of Cartier. "Family Papers, Correspondence with George Blumenthal, 1930-41," Box 4, Eugene Meyer Papers, 1864-1970, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

<sup>282</sup> According to the memoirs of Florence Blumenthal's niece, the Blumenthals sent plaster casts of Florence's delicate foot and ankle to friends and family for Christmas one year instead of cards. Graham, p. 8; Pyra Wise, "Bulletin d'informations proustiennes," *Centre d'études proustiennes*, n. 35 (2005), p. 27.

<sup>283</sup> Popular literature of the period commented on stylish portraits by Boldini that sold very well at auction as early as 1917. Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *The Life of Misisa Sert* (New York: Alfred S. Knopf, Inc., 1980), pp. 114; 209.

<sup>284</sup> Notes from Akela Reason, "Soul-Searching: The Portrait in Gilded Age America," presented at the Edgar P. Richardson Symposium *New Perspectives on Portraiture*, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C., September 21, 2018.

The first portrait, completed in 1896 when Florence was twenty-three years old (two years before to her marriage to George Blumenthal), portrays Florence seated in profile wearing a long silver dress, bearing her right shoulder, and a long strand of pearls, arm bracelet, and diamond diadem.<sup>285</sup> (See Figs. 37a-b) Because this first portrait of Florence was commissioned just one year after the Meyer family's relocation from San Francisco to New York, it most likely represented her coming out as a fashionable and attractive young woman in society.

Although no interior photographs of the Blumenthal's Paris residence have been uncovered, this early Boldini portrait likely hung in Paris during their marriage. In 1936, it was donated by George Blumenthal to the French National Museums in Florence's memory.<sup>286</sup> The portrait was initially received by the Louvre Museum, subsequently transferred to the Jeu de Paume (the contemporary repository for international artists), then finally put on deposit at the French Embassy in Vienna in 1961, where it remains on view in the Music Salon today.<sup>287</sup>

It is extremely fitting that the earliest Boldini portrait of Florence Blumenthal hangs today in the French Embassy in Vienna. Constructed by Georges Chedanne between 1904-1909 in the Art Nouveau style, the theme of the building is modernity and femininity and showcases several other paintings of women also on long-term deposit from the musée d'Orsay in Paris, as well as painted friezes and wall decoration with female figures, and statues of women by Christofle on the exterior. Since Florence Blumenthal was a modern woman in an artistic role, the Boldini portrait is appropriate to theme of the decoration.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> This early Boldini portrait of Florence Blumenthal measures 3.9 x 2.8 feet. The large diamond in the center of Florence's diadem is similar in shape to the 90.38 carat drop diamond known as the 'Indian Briolette' that was purchased by George Blumenthal from Cartier in 1911, fifteen years after the completion of the portrait. Hans Nadelhoffer, *Cartier* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), p. 321; Object file for JdeP 816, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

<sup>286</sup> Object file for JdeP 816, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

<sup>287</sup> The Boldini portrait of Florence Blumenthal was officially allocated to the musée d'Orsay following its founding in 1986. Object file for JdeP 816, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

<sup>288</sup> Notes from visit with Angelika Le Brun at the French Embassy in Vienna, June 18, 2015.

Prior to its donation to the French State, Boldini's portrait of Florence was selected as the frontispiece to the Blumenthal's collection catalogue of paintings, drawings, and sculpture.<sup>289</sup> (See Part 3 for more information on the Blumenthal catalogues) As this volume was dedicated to a portion of the couple's collection of eighteenth-century works of art, the decision to use this early portrait of Florence, painted prior to her marriage to George, may imply that this was her area of particular interest and that she was the driving force behind the collecting of this material. It also reiterates Florence's interest in modern portraiture and her support of contemporary artists.

The second, full-size portrait of Florence Blumenthal by Boldini was completed in 1912 and portrays Florence as a fashionable woman of the moment, dressed in a black and white satin gown, revealing her décolletage and shoulders, with bustling train and black jewel-buckled heels in the style of the eighteenth century.<sup>290</sup> (See Fig. 38a) Florence is depicted standing with the half step of her right foot, as if in motion, perhaps just about to perch on the recumbent chaise longue beside her. Beginning around 1910, and apparent in this portrait of Florence Blumenthal, Boldini employed swirling brushwork of color with a lack of discipline that helped to create an abstract pattern of movement.<sup>291</sup> It has been noted that Boldini completed his portrait of Florence Blumenthal quickly as apparent by the traction cracks around her hair, left arm, feet, and bottom of her gown, where the artist must have made compositional changes while the underlying layers of the paint were still wet.<sup>292</sup> The urgency to complete the portrait may have been due to the fact that it was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1912.<sup>293</sup>

Likely commissioned by Florence Blumenthal and completed in Boldini's studio in Paris, the date of this portrait suggests that the Blumenthals were already immersed in

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<sup>289</sup> See *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal*, New York, vol. 5 (Paris: Priv. print., A. Lévy, 1926-30).

<sup>290</sup> This style of shoe buckle was later revived by Pietro Yantorny in the early twentieth century. Label text from the exhibition "Killer Heels: The Art of the High-Heeled Shoe," The Brooklyn Museum of Art, (September 10, 2014-February 15, 2015).

<sup>291</sup> Gary A. Reynolds, *Giovanni Boldini and Society Portraiture, 1880-1920* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, 1984), p. 48.

<sup>292</sup> Object file for 41.876, Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

sophisticated Parisian society before George Blumenthal's transfer to France by Lazard Frères in 1914 and prior to the purchase of their home on the Boulevard Montmorency in the sixteenth district in 1920. (See Part 2B) As a married woman who suffered the loss of a child four years earlier, the image conveyed in this portrait is one of optimism, energy, and strength. Her delicate long arms and fingers, as well as a revealing drapery across her chest and shoulders, also conveys a femininity not conventional to the time, but rather avant-garde. Figure 38b illustrates a rare, surviving preparatory sketch of Florence Blumenthal by Boldini that Florence may have given to her sister, Aline.<sup>294</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no known correspondence between the Blumenthals and the artist.<sup>295</sup>

In 1941, the same year as the Blumenthal bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and just weeks prior to his death, George Blumenthal donated the second Boldini portrait of Florence Blumenthal to the Brooklyn Museum of Art as an anonymous gift. (See Part 3 for more information on the Metropolitan Museum of Art bequest) In correspondence between George Blumenthal and then Brooklyn Museum Director, Lawrence Roberts, Blumenthal requested that the work be entitled "Portrait of a Lady" and made no other stipulations except that it be exhibited whenever deemed appropriate.<sup>296</sup> While there is no additional evidence to support George Blumenthal's preference for the generic title of the painting, it is somewhat surprising that he did not prefer to include Florence's name, as was consistent with other examples of Boldini's representations of women during this period.

Shortly thereafter, George Blumenthal received a request from Florence's family members to keep the Boldini portrait after he had already offered it to the Brooklyn

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<sup>294</sup> Agnes and Eugene Meyer Estate, PR 13 CN 2009:109-2 Container 21 Folder 6, Library of Congress, Prints & Drawings.

<sup>295</sup> "15 Paintings by Giovanni Boldini Collected by the Late Baron Maurice de Rothschild," Christie's New York (November 1, 1995), lot 11; object file for 41.876, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

<sup>296</sup> Letter from George Blumenthal to Lawrence Roberts, June 12, 1941, object file for 41.876, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Museum of Art.<sup>297</sup> Correspondence between George Blumenthal and his brother-in-law, Eugene Meyer Jr., from 1941 reveals that upon learning of his in-laws wish to keep the painting, he attempted to withdraw his offer to the Museum, however it was too late as it had already been approved by the Board.<sup>298</sup> Although these are the only two known Boldini portraits of Florence Blumenthal, there has been reference to a small portrait of George Blumenthal Jr. by Boldini, the whereabouts of which are unknown.<sup>299</sup>

The third portrait of Florence Blumenthal, today in a private collection, was painted by the French artist and interior designer of the Art Deco period, Jean Dunand (1877-1942), in 1927 and remains in a private collection today. It is decorated with bright colored lacquers on a gold background and mother-of-pearl and colored pearl inlay that was exhibited at the Georges Petit Gallery in Paris that same year.<sup>300</sup> (See Fig. 39) In this final portrait, Florence Blumenthal is portrayed as a wealthy and powerful society lady of the day wearing a luxurious red sequinned dress decorated with her red ribbon of Legion of Honor, fur stole, and a matching emerald and diamond suite of jewelry, most likely purchased from Cartier, including a long necklace, three bracelets, ring and drop earrings.<sup>301</sup> In contrast to the earlier, more free-spirited portraits by Boldini, Florence is depicted here seated holding a cigarette and gazing directly at the viewer, emphasizing her established position, respected reputation, and her many accomplishments. The perception of herself as perhaps a committed patron of the arts and leader in her community, as well as maintaining her image as a fashionable and affluent trendsetter,

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<sup>297</sup> "Mrs. Blumenthal, Art Patron, Dead," *The New York Times* (September 22, 1930), p. 19; "May Be Buried Here. Mrs. George Blumenthal Probably to Be Brought to New York," Special Cable to *The New York Times* (October 22, 1930); object file for 41.876, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

<sup>298</sup> Eugene Meyer Papers, 1864-1970. "Family Papers, Correspondence with George Blumenthal, 1930-41," Box 4, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

<sup>299</sup> In October 1966, Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson, second wife of George Blumenthal, renounced her life interest in certain works of art bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by George Blumenthal following his death, as well as other works of art given by her subject to the reservation of a life estate. One of the objects listed in the Deed of Gift dated June 1964 was a small portrait of George Blumenthal's son by Boldini. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>300</sup> Félix Marcihac, *Jean Dunand: Vie et Oeuvre* (Paris: Edition de l'Amateur, 1991), p. 219, cat. 151.

<sup>301</sup> Florence Blumenthal was a client of Cartier and purchased many pieces of jewelry Art Deco jewelry in Paris during the 1920s. See Nadelhoffer.

demonstrates an evolution of her identity through portraiture and her goals of visual expression.

Jean Dunand, a prolific artist who was predominantly recognized for his sculpture and furniture, produced a select number of portraits of high society women during this period, reflecting the sophisticated circles of which he was a part and the leading female patrons of the day. Dunand and Florence Blumenthal had a close and long-standing friendship and he was personally selected by Florence in 1919 to serve as a member of the jury of her *La Fondation Américaine pour la Pensée et l'Art Français* to identify talented, contemporary French artists and award them with a stipend (see Philanthropy for more information about the Foundation).<sup>302</sup> As a result of this prestigious opportunity, and through exposure to Florence Blumenthal's international artistic circles, Dunand was invited to exhibit his work at the Duwin Gallery on Fifth Avenue in New York where he subsequently established a new clientele in America.<sup>303</sup>

In addition to portrait paintings, a surviving photographic portrait of Florence Blumenthal taken in the Library at 50 East 70th Street by the international photographer, Baron Adolph de Meyer (1868-1946), is conserved in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>304</sup> (See Fig. 40) De Meyer was known for taking portraits of well-known figures of the day, including American socialites and aristocratic and society hostesses.<sup>305</sup> Although undated, this portrait of Florence was likely taken during the early 1920s when de Meyer worked as a fashion photographer for *Harper's Bazar* and photographed the upper echelons of society.<sup>306</sup> This was also the period immediately following the completion of the Blumenthal's interiors at Park Avenue, showcased in the backdrop of the portrait. (See Part 2A for more information on this New York residence) In this portrait, Florence is wearing a Renaissance velvet gown and headpiece, in

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<sup>302</sup> Marcilhac, pp. 33-34.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>304</sup> Object file for 41.71.6, Department of Photographs, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>305</sup> See John Szarkowski, Willis Hartshorn, and Anne Ehrenkranz, *A Singular Elegance, the Photographs of Baron Adolph de Meyer* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994).

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40.

harmony with the couple's Renaissance-style interior of their New York residence. These four portraits of Florence Blumenthal illustrate her connection to some of the leading contemporary artists of the day, like many of her family members, and the conscious image she wished to portray during different stages of her life.

In contrast to the representations of Florence Blumenthal, two extant portraits of George Blumenthal are primarily associated with his involvement with specific institutions, notably the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Mount Sinai Hospital. The full-length, standing portrait of George Blumenthal by French painter, Adolphe Déchenaud (1868-1926), illustrates an older man wearing a three-piece suit and pocket watch, prominently displaying his Legion of Honor. The portraits (whereabouts unknown) was lent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Baroness von Wrangell, formerly Mary Ann Payne Blumenthal, in 1943.<sup>307</sup> It was later copied by Maxwell B. Starr (1901-1966) and hangs today in the boardroom of Mount Sinai Hospital accompanied by a plaque commemorating Blumenthal's service as Vice President, President and President Emeritus.<sup>308</sup> (See Fig. 25)

A second (seated) portrait of George Blumenthal by American portrait painter, Charles Hopkinson (1869-1962), was completed in 1933 and was purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art that same year, just prior to his election as President of the Board.<sup>309</sup> (See Fig. 41) Similar to the standing portraits by Déchenaud and Starr, Blumenthal is again portrayed wearing a three-piece suit and pocket watch (with Legion of Honor), however he is depicted seated on a carved and upholstered chair and appears much aged.<sup>310</sup>

The French sculptor, Paul Landowski (1875-1961), also executed portrait busts of both George and Florence Blumenthal. The first, a bronze bust of George Blumenthal, was commissioned in 1919 and is conserved today at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York (See

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<sup>307</sup> Maximilien Gauthier, *La Fondation Américaine Blumenthal pour La Pensée et l'Art Français* (Paris: PUF, 1974). p. 23.

<sup>308</sup> Mount Sinai Hospital, New York.

<sup>309</sup> Object file for 33.154, American Wing, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>310</sup> In 1933, George Blumenthal was seventy-five years old; Florence had already died, and George has not yet re-married.



Fig. 26).<sup>311</sup> Following the commission, Florence visited Landowski's Paris studio to witness the completed bust in October 1919 and their close friendship was formed over discussions about art and potential future commissions.<sup>312</sup> Florence Blumenthal even brought the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to Landowski's studio to see his work for potential acquisition, demonstrating her important artistic influence at the Museum and her key role of introducing the artist to American patrons.<sup>313</sup> In 1920, Landowski subsequently made a white marble bust of George Blumenthal, conserved today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York that was donated to the Museum by George Blumenthal's second wife, Ann Payne Blumenthal, in 1943.<sup>314</sup> (See Fig. 42)

Landowski also executed two busts of Florence Blumenthal. The first, in bronze (present whereabouts unknown), was likely commissioned at the same time as the bronze bust of George Blumenthal and was exhibited at the annual Salon des Artistes Français at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1920.<sup>315</sup> The second, in white marble and conserved today in the collections of Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University in New York, was commissioned in 1921.<sup>316</sup> (See Fig. 43). In his journal, Landowski recounted that sittings in his studio took place between April and November 1921, at the end of which, Florence Blumenthal paid Landowski 10,000 francs.<sup>317</sup>

<sup>311</sup> Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai archives (accessed December 18, 2015).

<sup>312</sup> Paul Landowski, *Journal de Paul Landowski, Un Artiste Humaniste*, October 11, 1919; September 20, 1921.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> Landowski's marble portrait bust of George Blumenthal was later placed at the entrance to the gallery of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1943 "Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal: A Special Exhibition; "The George Blumenthal Collection," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release (December 7, 1943); A.Z.Kruse, "At the Art Galleries, George Blumenthal Collection Reveals his Deep Interest in Religious Art," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 19, 1943).

<sup>315</sup> The Salon des Artistes Français was a direct successor of the Royal Academy Salon initiated by Louis XIV and Colbert in the seventeenth century and held at the Louvre. It was renamed in 1881 and held at the Grand Palais every year beginning in 1901. Object file for Inv.91.2.14, Musée des Années Trente, Boulogne-Billancourt; [www.artistes-francais.com](http://www.artistes-francais.com).

<sup>316</sup> Object records for inv. 68.10, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>317</sup> In his *Journal*, Landowski describes that the face of Florence Blumenthal was difficult to capture and she appeared nervous and fragile. He was confident that he would eventually get it right as long as she was able to come to his studio to pose. Landowski, April 28, 1921; November 9, 1921.

The marble bust of Florence Blumenthal is perhaps stylistically the most modest and humble depiction of Florence's self image and character. In contrast to the glamorous earlier depictions by Boldini and the later portrait by Dunand, Florence is portrayed with a short haircut, unadorned with jewelry or clothing, and her head tilted slightly to the left with a timid expression on her face. By portraying Florence as bare shouldered with an intentionally unfinished base contrasting with the smooth worked marble of the upper chest and face, Landowski perhaps sought to represent Florence's "New Woman" qualities as a patron of the arts.

In October 1921, one of Florence Blumenthal's sisters (most likely Elise Stern) and Madame Mühlfeld, a close friend and member of Florence's intimate Parisian circle and hostess of one of the most popular literary salons in Paris, visited Landowski's studio to admire the progress of the marble bust.<sup>318</sup> Originally planning to display the marble bust of Florence at the Salon of 1922, Landowski was not pleased with the final result and delayed its unveiling until late April 1923 when he exhibited it alongside the bronze of Florence.<sup>319</sup> Landowski's work was well received and the marble bust was featured in The New York Herald's Gallery of Women's Portraits in October 1925.<sup>320</sup> Landowski delivered the final marble bust to Florence Blumenthal in Paris on September 21, 1923 and it was ultimately displayed in the Blumenthal's *Salle Gothique*.<sup>321</sup> (See Fig. 81) The bust was later inherited by Florence's sister, Ruth Meyer Cook, and was subsequently donated to Columbia University in 1968 by Mrs. Janet Cook Loeb, Florence's niece.<sup>322</sup> Remarkably, Landowski's plaster bust of Florence Blumenthal from 1920 also survives and is conserved today at the Musée des Années 30 in Boulogne-Billancourt, just outside

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<sup>318</sup> Landowski recorded that the bust of Florence Blumenthal proved to be particularly challenging and did not take shape until it was complete. Landowski also mentioned that Madame Stern and Madame Mühlfeld did not seem pleased with the final version. Paul Landowski, October 12, 1921.

<sup>319</sup> Object file for Inv.91.2.14, Musée des Années Trente, Boulogne-Billancourt.

<sup>320</sup> "The Herald's Gallery of Women's Portraits," *New York Herald* (October 4, 1925); object file for Inv.91.2.14, Musée des Années Trente, Boulogne-Billancourt.

<sup>321</sup> Landowski, September 20, 1932; G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

<sup>322</sup> Object records for inv. 68.10, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York.

Paris, which was donated in 1991 by descendants of the Landowski family.<sup>323</sup> (See Fig. 44)

In addition to works by Landowski, Florence Blumenthal also had a collection of small bronze sculptures by the artist Herbert Haseltine (1877-1962), some of which she donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (in her own name) in 1926.<sup>324</sup>

Florence Blumenthal died from bronchial pneumonia in Paris on September 21, 1930 at the age of fifty-seven.<sup>325</sup> Before returning to New York for the burial, George Blumenthal organized a secular ceremony in the *Salle Gothique* on the Boulevard de Montmorency where more than one thousand visitors, including politicians, artists, and high society were in attendance.<sup>326</sup> (See Fig. 91 and Part 2B for additional details on the Florence's ceremony and on the *Salle Gothique*) Following the ceremony, Florence Blumenthal lied in state at the American Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity.<sup>327</sup> Several obituaries in the paper memorialized George and Florence's multiple joint philanthropies, her Legion of Honor, and her founding of the American Foundation for French Art and Thought.<sup>328</sup>

George Blumenthal died on June 26, 1941 in New York at the age of eighty-three. Several French and American newspapers reported Blumenthal's death and the

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<sup>323</sup> Object file for 1991.2.14, Musée des Années 30 in Boulogne-Billancourt.

<sup>324</sup> MMA Archives B6273. Correspondence from Florence Blumenthal in Paris to Metropolitan Museum of Art Director, Edward Robinson, informed him of the delivery and gift of two contemporary bronze horses made by Herbert Haseltine (1877-1962), mentioning that George F. Baker was very anxious that the Haseltine be represented in the Museum's collection. Florence's relationship to Baker, a fellow Museum donor and director of First National Bank, confirms her network of collectors and benefactors.

<sup>325</sup> Florence was cremated in Paris and transported back to New York for burial at Mount Pleasant Cemetery. "Mrs. Blumenthal, Art Patron, Dead," *The New York Times* (September 22, 1930); <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/185956553/florence-blumenthal/photo>.

<sup>326</sup> Loïc Métrope and Edmée Benoist de la Grandière, "La résidence du Parc de Montmorency et avant? Entre les deux guerres: une présence américaine, George et Florence Blumenthal" (Paris: Librairie, 34 rue du Docteur Blanche, 2002), p. 32.

<sup>327</sup> "Mrs. Blumenthal Honored in Death by Many Notables," G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

<sup>328</sup> "Mrs. Blumenthal, Art Patron, Dead," *The New York Times* (September 22, 1930); "Mrs. Blumenthal Cited by France For Charity, Dies," *Herald-Tribune* (September 22, 1930).

Metropolitan Museum of Art's July 1941 monthly bulletin was dedicated to the former president:

The Museum shares its loss with many another organization. But the loss is also shared by individuals in all walks of life who knew him, often as a patron and always as a friend; seldom have kindnesses and benevolences been so widely and so quietly practiced. When a man has attained (and more than attained) the allotted threescore years and ten, so gallantly and usefully, it is hard to find phrases adequate to mark his life's record. One could aptly say of Mr. Blumenthal, "We shall not look upon his like again."<sup>329</sup>

George Blumenthal's funeral service was held on June 30, 1941 at his Park Avenue residence.<sup>330</sup> Although Mary Ann Blumenthal requested that the funeral service remain informal, attendees included international nobility, businessmen, politicians, and collectors, such as Baron and Baroness Eugene de Rothschild, Baron and Baroness Robert de Rothschild, Mr. and Mrs. Simon Guggenheim, Governor and Mrs. Herbert Lehman, J.P. Morgan Jr., Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, as well as relatives of Florence Blumenthal.<sup>331</sup> Remarks were made by Reverend Frederick W. Beekman, dean of the American Episcopal Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Paris, and Dr. Sigismund Schultz Goldwater, City Commissioner of Hospitals and Director of Mount Sinai Hospital.<sup>332</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art made approximately three hundred copies of the memorial addresses from the funeral to distribute among personal friends and produced and delivered a set of photographs of the Blumenthal Park Avenue residence to Mary Ann Blumenthal, as well as a book of resolution in George Blumenthal's memory.<sup>333</sup> (The legacy of George Blumenthal's

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<sup>329</sup> "In Memoriam George Blumenthal, 1858-19141," *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. XXXVI, No. 7 (July 1941), p. 147.

<sup>330</sup> George Blumenthal was cremated on June 30, 1941. George Blumenthal's Certificate of Death, no. 13839, New York City Department of Records and Information Services, Municipal Archives, New York; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>331</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>332</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives. For more information on Dr. Goldwater, see "Dr. S.S. Goldwater Is Dead Here At 69," *New York Times* (Oct. 23, 1942), p. 21; for more information on Rev. Beekman, see "Dean Frederick Beekman Dies," *New York Times* (March 23, 1964).

<sup>333</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

presidency of the Metropolitan Museum of Art will be discussed in more detail in Part 3 of this thesis)

The fact that neither George nor Florence Blumenthal received a Jewish funeral, and a reverend conducted the ceremony of George, further suggests that the couple was not observant or practicing Jews and completely assimilated, a common occurrence in wealthy Jewish society in New York during this period.<sup>334</sup>

### Conclusion

Through an in-depth analysis of George and Florence Blumenthal's family origins, we can better understand what factors shaped and influenced their collecting motivations and philanthropy as a married couple. Compared to information uncovered in correspondence, family biographies, and archives related to Florence Blumenthal and the Meyer family, relatively less information is available about the family origins and career of George Blumenthal. From unearthed documentation among existent material in the archives, business journals, and museum records, George Blumenthal came from a Jewish, merchant class family in Frankfurt, Germany, emigrated to the United States by himself as a young man, and became a successful financier on Wall Street, perhaps a symbol of the American dream. He developed a highly respected reputation as a result of his business savvy skills and financial success, however was often described as having a difficult, or tough, personality and did not always get along with fellow associates and colleagues. Nevertheless, he was able to position himself socially, early on, among other wealthy businessmen, collectors, and American and European aristocracy, both Jewish and non. He devoted a substantial amount of time to philanthropy and volunteer organizations, serving on board positions at both Mount Sinai Hospital and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where he later became the first Jewish President during a precarious period of the 1930s.

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<sup>334</sup> The wedding ceremony of Mary Ann Payne Clews and George Blumenthal was also performed by Reverend Father Henry F. Hammer of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York at the Clews' home. "Mrs. James B. Clews Married Here to George Blumenthal," MMA Medieval Records.

Unlike George Blumenthal, Florence Meyer was raised in a wealthy Jewish family, from California, with French rabbinical origins, and was exposed to art from a young age. Many of her siblings married into other important Jewish dynasties and became early collectors of modern art, funding art institutions, universities, and public parks still in existence today. Some were also involved in the upper echelons of society and Washington politics.

Despite these early differences, George and Florence Blumenthal together amassed a wide-ranging collection of paintings, furniture, and decorative arts in both New York and in France. They established relationships with artists, dealers, collectors, and museums. They were also able to commission three residences in New York (two in Manhattan and one in the Adirondacks) and two homes in France, all of which all will be discussed in greater detail in Part 2.

## Part 2A. Houses in America

### The Blumenthal's New York Residences: architects, designers, and dealers and inventories of the collections

George and Florence Blumenthal contributed to the history of collecting in the Gilded Age and the first quarter of the twentieth century. The design and construction of their homes in New York served as a vehicle for the Blumenthals to fulfill a public educational role, not merely to display their wealth. This chapter will primarily focus on the couple's principal mansion on Park Avenue, commissioned in 1911, to house their growing art collection. It will also analyze the architects, designers, and dealers involved in the project, as well as the layout and arrangement of the home in order to illustrate that the couple's ultimate intention was its transformation into a public museum. This chapter will also identify the couple's two previous Manhattan residences during the early years of their marriage, as well as their summer cottage in the Adirondacks, a Great Camp known as Knollwood Club, commissioned between 1899-1900 in partnership with five other prominent Jewish families from New York in reaction to the growing anti-Semitism of the period.<sup>1</sup> Finally, an in-depth analysis of the Blumenthal residences in New York will establish the Blumenthal's collecting activity and social circles in America, in the context of other contemporary collectors, and set the stage for their move to France that will be discussed in Part 2B.

#### New York, The Early Years

There is less information known about the early years of George and Florence Blumenthal's relocation to New York in the late nineteenth century compared to their activities in the twentieth century. However, letters from Florence Blumenthal to her

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<sup>1</sup> Several studies have already traced anti-Semitism in America at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Naomi W. Cohen, "Antisemitism in the Gilded Age: The Jewish View," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn 1979), pp. 187-210; Michael N. Dobkowski, "American Anti-Semitism: A Reinterpretation," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1977), pp. 166-181; John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (March, 1957), pp. 559-578; John Higham, "Social Discrimination Against Jews in America, 1830-1930," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (September, 1957), pp. 1-33.

siblings in San Francisco, as early as 1894, just one year after the Meyer family's permanent relocation to New York, illustrate that she was already immersed in an elite Jewish social circle, frequently dining with prominent collectors and businessmen, including Sidney Rothschild, Arthur and George Herzog, Henri Blum, Helen Rothschild, Gertie Rothschild, Mr. David-Weill, the Guggenheims, Arthur Lehman, Allie Wuttenberg, Jessie Strauss, Eugene Hellman, and Herbert Kahn, among others.<sup>2</sup> During the second half of the nineteenth century, the social climate in New York society was extremely codifying and restricting, and newly wealthy Jewish families, often of German origin, created their own social circles as they were not accepted or integrated into upper class society.<sup>3</sup> While the Meyers belonged to a Reformed Jewish congregation and were not overtly religiously, both George and Florence Blumenthal would likely have experienced some form of anti-Semitism and exclusion from non-Jewish new moneyed New York society.<sup>4</sup> While Jews were tolerated in the financial community of Wall Street, they were not accepted on Fifth Avenue.<sup>5</sup>

The year 1898 proved to be a fundamental moment for George and Florence Blumenthal in the formation of their partnership. It was not only the year of their marriage, but also the year of the birth of their only son, George Jr., and the relocation to a temporary furnished rental home at 36 West 46<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, their first joint residence.<sup>6</sup> In a letter to her sister Rosalie Stern in San Francisco, Florence Blumenthal described the interior furnishings of the couple's home together:

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<sup>2</sup> Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, Carton 1:36, BANC MSS 2010/604, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, Carton 2:1, BANC MSS 2010/604, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley); Berger, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Discrimination in the Gilded Age, in part due to the upward mobility of many German Jews who arrived in the 1840s and 1850s that aroused jealousy and resentment, was also due to a pervasive negative image of the Jew propagated by the popular culture of the period. These resentments also stemmed from earlier speculation that Jews had been engaged in profiteering during the Civil War, were involved in speculation of gold, and had no political or religious sympathy to the United States and were merely interested in making money. Michael N. Dobkowski, "American Anti-Semitism: A Reinterpretation," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1977), p. 175; Naomi W. Cohen, "Antisemitism in the Gilded Age: The Jewish View," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn 1979), p. 189.

<sup>4</sup> Graham, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Birmingham, p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> Seligman, p. 144; Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, Carton 2:15, BANC MSS 2010/604, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



There is a sculpture hall with large carved cabinets, benches, etc. and only a few plants. No carpets in entire home. Walls of the hall are hung with tapestries. To the right is a door leading to the side entrance, kitchen etc, all very light and cheerful. Going upstairs, a large foyer hall furnished with very beautiful tapestries, especially the furniture. The parlor is the finest of all-it is hung in red striped satin and there are fine tapestries, each with a narrow gilt frame around. The furniture is red brocade and white enameled frames. A number of tables of all sizes...From the foyer hall is the dining room. The dining room is a little small-also hung in tapestries and old furniture. The chairs are over 100 years old and very comfortable. Their silver looks lovely on the sideboards one on each side of the room. The library is also red, dark wood and open bookshelves. In this room, they have most of George's paintings which add to the heart of the room which is not very large not anything grand but very easy and comfortable. Their room is bright and lively. Bathroom leads off their room in the hall. Above are two splendid bedrooms, a nice bath and a small ballroom which the maid has.<sup>7</sup>

The decoration of this early apartment undoubtedly had a lasting effect on the Blumenthals. The use of tapestries, satin-covered walls, and antique furniture provided an initial introduction to a New York aesthetic and served as a model for their future homes. While perhaps not yet seasoned collectors during the preliminary years of their engagement and marriage, Florence's mention of "George's paintings" reference his early interest in collecting which soon expanded to the joint purchase of furniture and works of art as a married couple. This may also suggest that it was Florence who influenced George to collect decorative arts. (See Part 3 for more details on the collecting partnership and goals for their collection)

### The Great Camp: Knollwood Club

As a result of the emerging anti-Semitism at the end of the nineteenth century that often excluded Jews from many of the established Upstate resorts frequented by New York's upper class, George Blumenthal, in partnership with five other prominent Jewish families and friends, purchased three hundred and thirty-nine acres of heavily wooded property on Shingle Bay, Lower Saranac Lake, and built a summer estate, known as Knollwood Club,

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<sup>7</sup> Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, Carton 2:15, BANC MSS 2010/604, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

in the Adirondack Mountains.<sup>8</sup> The other original members of Knollwood Club included corporate and constitutional lawyer, Louis Marshall (1856-1929); industrialist and philanthropist, Daniel Guggenheim (1856-1930); stockbroker, banker, and trustee of Mount Sinai Hospital, Elias Asiel (1853-1920); Max Nathan (1828-1922); and Abram N. Stein (1859-1911), all of whom had previously summured at the Childwold Park House, a popular hotel and summer resort on nearby Lake Massawepie.<sup>9</sup> While the camp was a collaborative investment, George Blumenthal proved to be a pioneering leader who first identified the opportunity to invest in land early on for use as a summer retreat.<sup>10</sup> While we do not have any concrete evidence, it is extremely likely that George Blumenthal selected the site since he purchased the largest plot of land and was instrumental in setting it up.

Between the 1890s and 1930s, many prominent newly wealthy (non-Jewish) New York families were also building massive hunting lodges (then called Great Camps) in the Adirondacks, including William Rockefeller (1841-1922), brother of John D. Rockefeller, Alfred G. (1877-1915) and Frederick William Vanderbilt (1856-1938) (son and brother of Cornelius Vanderbilt, respectively), and Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887-1973).

In 1899, George Blumenthal hired designer William L. Coulter to design the complex and the Saranac firm of Branch and Callanan to build the camp.<sup>11</sup> When the buildings were first designed, the founding members believed that the natural setting of the site was

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<sup>8</sup> [https://localwiki.org/hsl/Knollwood\\_Club](https://localwiki.org/hsl/Knollwood_Club)

<sup>9</sup> Harvey H. Kaiser, *Great Camps of the Adirondacks* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982), p. 140; Childwold Photograph Collection, New York Heritage digital collections, <https://nyheritage.org/collections/childwold-photograph-collection>; “The 1901 Elias Asiel Mansion,” *Daytonian in Manhattan* (April 5, 2013), <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.fr/2013/04/the-1901-elias-asiel-mansion-no-15-e.html>.

<sup>10</sup> [https://localwiki.org/hsl/Knollwood\\_Club](https://localwiki.org/hsl/Knollwood_Club); Geraldine Fabrikant, “Summer Retreats When Old Money Was New,” *The New York Times* (August 12, 2010), <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/13/travel/13regis.html?mcubz=1>; Lawrence P. Gooley, “The Adirondacks: Supplanting the Gilded Age,” *The New York History Blog* (July 21, 2014), <http://newyorkhistoryblog.org/2014/07/21/the-adirondacks-supplanting-the-gilded-age/>.

<sup>11</sup> Kaiser, p. 140.

equally important as the houses they planned to build.<sup>12</sup> The final arrangement of the property consisted of a two-storey log-framed boathouse by the shore with an overhanging verandah; a two-storey polygonal “casino” with a hipped roof set behind the boathouse (the first floor functioned as the central dining room until 1932, the second floor used for recreational space); and six identical two-and-a-half storey Victorian shingle cottages with twig work facades.<sup>13</sup> (See Figs. 45a-c) It was not unusual for these great camps to consist of numerous buildings for families, guests, and staff, often only accessible by water, and they were frequently fabricated from natural logs (with the bark left on), typical of Adirondack-style design.<sup>14</sup>

The collaboration between Coulter and Branch and Callanan at Knollwood must have been extremely efficient as the main buildings were completed in just one year and the families used the camp for the first time in the summer of 1900.<sup>15</sup> The layout of the camp design and individual cottages have been described in illustrative detail:

...[T]he architects created a collection of rustic structures affording individual privacy for each family while retaining a sense of community. This was achieved by providing houses for the individual families to serve as sleeping units, and a central ‘casino’ to act as dining and recreation building. The pattern is similar to older clubs in the Adirondacks but was rarely carried through with such fine continuity of design, site features, and building orientation...The family cottages, while oriented to the lake, are barely visible throughout a lakefront screen of trees. A wooden boardwalk on the uphill side of the cottages threads through the forest linking the buildings together. Bridges of different rustic design span from the boardwalk into the midlevel entrance of each cottage. In plan, the cottages contained living rooms, a small service kitchen, and four to six

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

<sup>13</sup> George Blumenthal owned Cottage Two and later conveyed his membership to his cousin, Hugo Blumenthal, who then left it to his son, Walter Blumenthal. The cottage subsequently passed to Hugo’s daughter, Louise Blumenthal Sulzberger (d. 2001) and her husband David Sulzberger (d. 1962) and currently remains in the Sulzberger family to this day. Once containing many Indian paintings and antique furniture, a fire in 1982 severely damaged the property. Kaiser, p. 144; [https://localwiki.org/hsl/Knollwood\\_Club](https://localwiki.org/hsl/Knollwood_Club); [https://localwiki.org/hsl/George\\_Blumenthal](https://localwiki.org/hsl/George_Blumenthal); “Louise B. Sulzberger, 103, Dies; Devoted Years to Social Services,” *The New York Times* (June 11, 2001), <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/11/nyregion/louise-b-sulzberger-103-dies-devoted-years-to-social-services.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Geraldine Fabrikant, “Summer Retreats When Old Money Was New,” *The New York Times* (August 12, 2010), <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/13/travel/13regis.html?mcubz=1>.

<sup>15</sup> Kaiser, p. 140.

bedrooms. The working drawings numbered the family units one through six and lots were drawn to determine ownership... Two-and-a-half story log porches wrap the three sides of the cottages facing the lake. Soaring log gables, tier upon tier, in fans, sunburst panels, and geometric patterns on the six side-by-side buildings are in themselves thrilling. In a tour-de-force of imaginative design, the architects transformed what were essentially period, shingle-frame houses into six unique rustic cottages. Peeled logs used in the decorative triangular screen marked the attic level directly below the roof line. Dark shadows created by the deeply set porches, especially by the wooden screens, give to each camp an oddly light and skeletal appearance—as if nothing but the framework existed and the interior were a hollow space. The original interiors of the six cottages were almost identical. The lower floors contained a large living area with several smaller spaces off to the sides, a small service kitchen and pantry, and in some, a bedroom. A massive granite fireplace dominated the center of each cottage living room. The ceilings were low, supported on rough-hewn beams that sometimes retained the original bark. These rooms were filled with Indian craft objects, fishing gear, japoniserie, and a combination of Mission style-Stickley and Glasgow School wooden furniture.<sup>16</sup>

In 1900, the clerk of the Saranac Lake village, Seaver Asbury Miller, praised the architecture and advantages of Knollwood Club, describing it as:

...unsurpassed by any camp in the Adirondacks, and especially for this arrangement of buildings, as it is in a bay facing the south, protected from high winds, and has shallow as well as deep water and is surrounded by virgin forests. The camp is on an elevation and is well drained. This place affords one of the rare opportunities offered to gentlemen coming to the Adirondacks, and especially the game park, and it is the intention of the owners of this property to stock their ponds with fish and to preserve the trees of the forest.<sup>17</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, George Blumenthal already possessed a strong interest in working with designers, architects, and builders, a skill he would further develop during the construction of the next two homes he would build with Florence in New York, as well as an appreciation for property investment. It is also apparent that by building his own Great Camp on vacant plots of land for sale in the area, George Blumenthal, in collaboration with a group of close friends, demonstrated the initiative to carve out his own home in the Adirondacks, resolving the dilemma of how to be at home

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<sup>16</sup> Kaiser, p. 140.

<sup>17</sup> [https://localwiki.org/hsl/Knollwood\\_Club](https://localwiki.org/hsl/Knollwood_Club).

within a discriminating and restricting society, similar to diaspora Jews throughout history.<sup>18</sup>

As Simon J. Bronner discusses in *Jews at Home: The Domestication of Identity*, the Great Camp, in this instance, served a symbolic purpose as a means of protection, as well as a domestic haven free from the pressure to conform and the cultural assault from the non-Jewish host society.<sup>19</sup> George Blumenthal and his friends consciously created identities for themselves by creating their own vacation community that in turn provided shelter, as well as a sense of belonging and modern Jewish identity, a sign of arrival, a fortress of resistance and liberation from religious discrimination from the majority society, and a social affiliation with other Jews.<sup>20</sup>

In *Diaspora and Visual Culture*, Stuart Hall defines diaspora identities as those that are constantly producing and reproducing themselves through transformation and difference and describes cultural identity as a shared culture and collective self.<sup>21</sup> Not only did Knollwood Club represent an enclave of Jewish country houses, it also facilitated opportunities for networking and business opportunities with other Jewish colleagues and peers, as well as with non-Jewish homeowners nearby, while providing self-protection and a buffer against anti-Semitism.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps it was this systematic alienation of minorities that inspired George Blumenthal, as a foreigner, to establish a summer home. This discriminatory encounter may have also propelled George and Florence Blumenthal to eventually build an impressive Manhattan mansion decorated with European works of art as a means of achieving an identity through collecting and acceptability in society, while maintaining a philanthropic function in mind.

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<sup>18</sup> See Nicholas Mirzoeff ed., *Diaspora and Visual Culture, Representing Africans and Jews* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Simon J. Bronner, "The Dualities of House and Home in Jewish Culture, *Jews at Home: The Domestication of Identity*," *Jewish Cultural Studies*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2010), p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Bronner, pp. 5, 10, 12; 24.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Nicholas Mirzoeff ed., *Diaspora and Visual Culture, Representing Africans and Jews* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 22; 31.

<sup>22</sup> Notes from Leora Auslander's keynote address "What made a Jewish country home Jewish?", Jewish Country House conference, The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, Oxford University, March 6, 2018, <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/what-made-jewish-country-home-jewish>.

The Blumenthal Residence at 23 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, New York City: Beaux-Arts Architecture in the Gilded Age

Just a few years later in 1902, the Blumenthals built a four-story mansion at 23 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street for a total cost of \$75,000.<sup>23</sup> (See Fig. 46a) Designed by the New York architectural firm of Hunt & Hunt, renowned for their sprawling Gilded Age estates in Newport and Vanderbilt mansions along Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, the Blumenthal's Beaux-Arts mansion in Manhattan was described in the press as "one of the best midblock mansions ever erected in New York."<sup>24</sup> This is somewhat of an unusual progression as most New York families usually established their New York townhouses or mansions prior to building their summer retreats, however, it seems plausible that George Blumenthal, with the support of his five collaborators, may have taken advantage of this unexpected discovery of available land upstate. The building of the Blumenthal's first home also occurred during the three-year period when George Blumenthal temporarily withdrew from business, suggesting an absence of any financial restraints.<sup>25</sup> The fact that the Blumenthals selected a renowned architect to some of the newly wealthy families in America suggests that they were perhaps concerned with establishing their position in society during these early years.

Similar to the Blumenthal's initial rental on West 46<sup>th</sup> Street, the location of their 53<sup>rd</sup> Street home on the West side followed the more popular migration of great houses uptown on the East Side of Manhattan during this period, the majority being built along Fifth and Park avenues and the perpendicular side streets connecting them between East 50<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> streets, with the grandest of all located on the corner lots of these avenues.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan Database 1900-1986," (February 15, 2015), <http://www.MetroHistory.com>); "The Real Estate Field," *The New York Times* (February 26, 1916).

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes/West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street Between Fifth and Sixth Avenues; Commerce, and Art, Eclipse a Town House Block," *The New York Times* (February 14, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> "George Blumenthal, 43 Years in Wall Street, Quits Banking for Philanthropic Work."

<sup>26</sup> "The Private Home Centre is Advancing up Fifth Avenue," *The New York Times* (December 7, 1913); Michael C. Kathrens, *Great Houses of New York, 1880-1930*, vol. I (New York: Acanthus Press, 2005), p. 322.

At the time of the Blumenthal commission, the surrounding neighborhood was inhabited by several prominent New York families, including John D. Rockefeller and Philip Lehman, both on West 54<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as many important private art collections.<sup>27</sup>

The Blumenthal's four-storey Beaux-Arts style stone house on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street was inspired by French design and contained elegantly symmetrical features that conveyed a grand exterior façade. The ground level showcased an arched doorway with a single arched window on either side on the ground level, each surmounted by a carved gargoyle; three large rectangular windows on the first floor (likely used for entertaining), topped by carved acanthus scrolls and separated by iconic columns; three smaller rectangular windows (likely the private apartments), capped by rectilinear pediments and separated by decorative, vertical columns, with a single shield decorated with an acanthus wreath and a winged angel on either end; and three rectangular windows of slightly larger size (likely the servants apartments), topped with a heart shaped finial; all enclosed by a Mansart-style roof. (See Fig. 46b-d)

The few surviving photographs of exterior architectural details of the house, conserved today in the Museum of Modern Art archives in New York, were likely taken as documentary evidence prior to the demolition in the 1970s of a row of houses, including the Blumenthals', to make way for the Museum's new expansion project.<sup>28</sup> Given its relatively recent destruction, it is surprising that more exterior photographs of the house were not taken, particularly since there are no known surviving interior designs.

Thanks to a description of the interior of 23 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street recounted in *The New Yorker*, decades after the Blumenthal's occupied the property, it is possible to reconstruct a general layout of the house, however alterations were likely made by subsequent

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<sup>27</sup> Gray, "Streetscapes/West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street Between Fifth and Sixth Avenues; Commerce, and Art, Eclipse a Town House Block."

<sup>28</sup> The site of the Blumenthal house consists of a Museum Tower development located at 15 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street today. Christopher Gray, "With a Museum for a Neighbor...", *The New York Times* (May 2, 2013), <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/realestate/momas-history-of-demolishing-potential-landmarks.html>.

owners.<sup>29</sup> Based on the description, the ground floor of the house opened onto to a grand marble foyer with two wide marble staircases. The second floor consisted of a master dressing room that spanned the entire length of the house, from which a bridge over the stairwell connected a dining room and a small wood-panelled room. The staircases to the upper floors transitioned from marble to wood and the third floor contained a panelled library, bedroom, and dressing room. The three to four rooms on the top floor were reserved for staff.<sup>30</sup> The presence of a marble foyer and grand staircase suggest that the house was used for entertaining and would have made an impressive impact on guests upon arrival. The luxurious materials, if in fact original to the Blumenthal's time, are consistent with the taste for decadence during the Gilded Age.

Not long after the completion of the house on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, the Blumenthals built a second, larger house on the Upper East Side. As a result of the significant expansion of their collections during the first quarter of the twentieth century, including the purchase of significant architectural elements, notably the Vélez Blanco patio in 1913, it is likely that the need for a larger, fully detached residence soon followed. (See Part 3 for more information on the acquisition and installation of the Spanish Patio) In 1911, the Blumenthals acquired a significant plot of land on East 70<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Avenue, on which the limestone mansion was completed in 1917. In 1916, they sold the mansion on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street to the American heiress and socialite, Frances Burke Roche (née Work).<sup>31</sup> It was also during this period of World War I that the Blumenthals began

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<sup>29</sup> Isadora Bennett, Geoffrey T. Hellman, and Harold Ross, "Ballet House," *The New Yorker* (February 15, 1941), p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> "The Real Estate Field," *The New York Times* (February 26, 1916), p. 10.

In 1925, the house was purchased by publisher Paul Block who then sold it to the Criterion Club of which he was president. The organization subsequently installed a gymnasium on the top floor of the clubhouse and was eventually raided by Prohibition agents in 1932. In 1935, Mrs. Bettie Rothfeld purchased the house through a foreclosure of the Club's mortgage, passing ownership to the Rothfeld estate that leased the house for a few years to an antiques dealer. In the summer of 1940, Richard Pleasant, founding director of the Ballet Theater (known as the American Ballet Theater today), rented the property and soon thereafter transformed it into the theatre's headquarters in 1941. When MoMA began acquiring adjacent properties and townhouses for further expansion (to its location at 11 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street), the ground floor of the Blumenthal house was converted into offices in 1973 and 1975, later serving as one of the Museum's shops, still preserving the grand Beaux-Arts style façade. "The Real Estate Field," *The New York Times*



spending increasing amounts of time in France due to George's position at Lazard Frères that no doubt facilitated a number of purchases of works of art and influenced their collecting.<sup>32</sup> (See Part 2B for more information on the Blumenthal's residences in France) The Blumenthal's transition from these early Manhattan residences, as a newly married couple, to a larger, permanent home, served as the principal setting to showcase their collection and allowed them to develop their combined philanthropic goals.

### The Blumenthal Residence at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street: An Italian Renaissance Mansion on the Upper East Side

Through an analysis of the Blumenthal's team of architects and designers, I will argue that the Park Avenue residence was consciously built around their art collection and with the public and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in mind, illustrating the couple's design and collecting influences, as well as Florence Blumenthal's active involvement in aspects of the construction and decoration of their final New York home.

In 1911, George Blumenthal commissioned the New York architectural firm of Trowbridge & Livingston to construct a four-story grand mansion located at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street on the southwest corner of Park Avenue at a cost of \$300,000, a substantial sum at the time, however consistent with the cost of constructing other mansions in the neighborhood.<sup>33</sup> (See Fig. 47) The site was previously part of the Union Theological Seminary located at 700 Park Avenue and extended between East 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> Streets.<sup>34</sup> (See Fig. 48) This area of Park Avenue on the Upper East Side became a fashionable and highly desirable residential neighborhood following the electrification of the trains in 1907 and the subsequent covering over of the tracks, creating the handsome wide uptown boulevard of today.<sup>35</sup> As a result of increasing real estate prices during the early

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(February 26, 1916), p. 10; Gray, "With a Museum for a Neighbor..."; Norval White, Elliot Willensky, Fran Leadon, *AIA Guide to New York City* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 339.

<sup>32</sup> De Rougemont, p. 343.

<sup>33</sup> Trowbridge & Livingston Research Materials, Box 1, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library Drawings and Archives, Columbia University.

<sup>34</sup> Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan Database 1900-1986," (February 15, 2015), <http://www.MetroHistory.com>).

<sup>35</sup> Kathrens, vol. I, p. 295.

twentieth century, New York experienced a decline in the number of private houses, thus making single-family residences a luxury that only the most affluent individuals could afford.<sup>36</sup>

The move uptown and the commission of a newly constructed mansion that spanned half a city block no doubt marked a transition for the Blumenthals in society, status, and personal wealth and positioned them among other newly wealthy individuals, including industrialists and bankers. The plot adjoining the Blumenthals' at 39 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street (on the corner of 69<sup>th</sup> Street), which also included the remaining lower half of the Park Avenue block, was purchased by wealthy railroad industrialist, Arthur Curtiss James, in 1917. The James house was designed by Allen & Collens in the English Renaissance style and was separated from the Blumenthal house by several feet and a garden.<sup>37</sup> (See Fig. 49)

In addition to Trowbridge & Livingston, New York builders Marc Eidlitz & Son were hired to design and construct a Florentine-style palazzo for the Blumenthal's new residence.<sup>38</sup> (Figs. 50a-d depicts the four stages of construction of the Blumenthal house between May-August, 1912 by Marc Eidlitz & Son) Trowbridge & Livingston's residential buildings to date had been designed in a variety of styles popular during this period, including neo-Federal, Beaux-Arts, and neo-Italian Renaissance, and they undertook commissions for private residences for a rich and powerful clientele, including Henry Osborne Havemeyer, Henry Phipps, and Paul Sachs, all located on the Upper East Side not far from the Blumenthals.<sup>41</sup> A contemporary newspaper described the firm's

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<sup>36</sup> Kathrens, vol. II, p. 143.

<sup>37</sup> "The Private Home Centre is Advancing up Fifth Avenue, *The New York Times* (December 7, 1913); Kathrens, vol. I, p. 322.

<sup>38</sup> Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan Database 1900-1986," (February 15, 2015), <http://www.MetroHistory.com>).

<sup>41</sup> Susan Vicinelli, "An American History of the Marble Relief Sculptures from Sicily," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, vol. 73, No. 1/2, European Sculpture and Decorative Arts (1999), p. 55. In addition to private residences, Trowbridge & Livingston also designed public and commercial buildings, including the St. Regis Hotel (1904), B. Altman & Co. department store (1906), J.P. Morgan & Co. Building (1913), the New York Stock Exchange extension (1923) Katherine C. Moore, "Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010," Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University.

project for the Blumenthals as “...the largest individual operation lately completed...occupying half of the avenue frontage...the house is a model of simplicity and dignified elegance.”<sup>39</sup>

Renaissance, Romanesque, and Rococo architectural styles began to emerge during this period as an outgrowth of the opulent European Beaux-Arts style and the best architectural firms filled New York City blocks with American interpretations of Venetian palazzos, French chateaux, and Georgian mansions.<sup>40</sup> The Blumenthals followed this trend with their shift from Beaux-Arts on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street to a more reserved Italian Renaissance style. Although the motive for its execution is not known, a sketch of the façade of the Blumenthal house from 1934 provides an effective visual sense of its imposing presence on the corner of Park Avenue.<sup>41</sup> (See Fig. 51)

Another contemporary example of an Italian Renaissance-revival mansion erected on the Upper East Side of Manhattan during the first decade of the twentieth century was the Harkness House, located at 1 East 75<sup>th</sup> Street, erected in 1908 by Edward S. Harkness, son of Ohio businessman and investor in John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company.<sup>42</sup> Composed of seven floors and constructed on a narrow plot, the Harkness House was turned on its side to create an entrance on 75<sup>th</sup> Street (rather than on Fifth Avenue) for additional light and the illusion of greater width.<sup>43</sup> Similar to the Blumenthal house, it was praised for its restrained exterior decoration “free from excess and exaggeration.”<sup>44</sup> It was also noted “if there is any façade on upper Fifth Avenue which gives an effect of quiet elegance by worthier architectural means it has not been our good fortune to come

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<sup>39</sup> “The Private Home Centre is Advancing up Fifth Avenue, *The New York Times*, December 7, 1913.

<sup>40</sup> Kathrens, vol. I, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> The sketch of the façade of the Blumenthal mansion is signed, but unfortunately illegible, and is currently conserved in the private collection of the author. Kathrens, vol. I, p. 295.

<sup>42</sup> Similar to the Blumenthals, the Harknesses focused on philanthropies rather than hosting lavish balls, and entertaining consisted of relatively intimate dinner parties and recitals at their Manhattan home.

“The 1908 Edward Harkness House-1 East 75<sup>th</sup> Street,” *Daytonian in Manhattan* (September 17, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

across it.”<sup>45</sup> While much larger than the Blumenthals’ residence, it is useful to highlight the Harkness mansion as a similar visual reference of Renaissance-revival architecture of the Gilded Age since it still survives today.<sup>46</sup>

The exterior of Blumenthal's new three-storey residence was completed in 1914 and was composed of brick and limestone, with a tiled roof, measuring 113 feet 8 inches long and 75 feet 8 inches wide.<sup>47</sup> To avoid the impression of a narrow, dark house, Trowbridge & Livingston, similar to the Harkness design, turned the structure to the side to create an entrance on 70th Street rather than Park Avenue. Arched windows and a column-framed entrance were set into the East 70<sup>th</sup> Street facade. The exterior of the two upper floors had square-headed windows supporting full entablatures trimmed with quoin stone. The tiled roof above concealed the windows of many small servants' rooms.<sup>48</sup>

The lengthy six-year completion of the interiors of the house was ultimately realized between 1919-1920, however, the Blumenthals moved into their new home by February 1918.<sup>49</sup> The interiors were principally designed by Goodhue Livingston and the Paris-based decorating firm of L. Alavoine et Cie., who co-operated with Trowbridge and Livingston and Marc Eidletz & Sons at the time of construction.<sup>50</sup>

Fashionable decorators, like Alavoine, would have been extremely familiar with the current tastes in America during this period and would have brokered relationships and fostered stylistic borrowings among their elite clientele. Lucien Alavoine began his career as an employee of the Parisian decorating and furniture-making firm, Etienne-Simon-

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Like the Blumenthals, Edward and Mary Harkness were art avid collectors and bequeathed their extensive collection of European paintings and Egyptian works of art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1950. Michelle Young, “An Inside Look at NYC’s Gilded Age Harkness House with NY Adventure Club,” (March 20, 2015), <https://untappedcities.com/2015/03/20/an-inside-look-at-nycs-gilded-age-harkness-house-with-ny-adventure-club>.

<sup>47</sup> Katherine C. Moore, “Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1,” Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University.

<sup>48</sup> Kathrens, vol. I, p. 295.

<sup>49</sup> While it has been suggested that the Blumenthals began to move from their home on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street to Park Avenue in 1919, archives indicate that they had already relocated by February 1918. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>50</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

Eugène Roudillon, that supplied furniture to established American collectors, including J. Pierpont Morgan, Henry Walters, and Henry Clay Frick.<sup>51</sup> With the financial assistance of former client and silent partner, Edouard Mamelsdorf, Lucien Alavoine bought out Roudillon and combined the two firms to create L. Alavoine et Cie.<sup>52</sup> The business was an immediate success, as recalled by former colleagues:

Alavoine seemed to do almost every important piece of work that was being done at the time—even the interiors of the palace of the Emperor of Japan. I was told that Alavoine had a beautiful delivery carriage that was well known in Paris...Older men told me how magnificent it looked going through the streets of Paris making deliveries. Then the Americans came: Astor, Oelrichs, Berwind, Duke—they all visited Alavoine when they came over to Paris.<sup>53</sup>

Beginning in the 1890's, Alavoine collaborated with other well-known French decorators, such as Jules Allard et Fils, on important American commissions for Gilded Age mansions in Newport, Rhode Island, including Marble House (1892) for William and Alva Vanderbilt, The Breakers (1895) for Cornelius Vanderbilt II, and the Elms (1901) for Edward Julius Berwind, several of which were designed by the Blumenthal's first architect on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Richard Morris Hunt.<sup>54</sup> For these early projects, Alavoine served as a subcontractor who shipped the completed Allard interiors from Paris to America accompanied by teams of craftsmen from Alavoine's own shop to install them on-site.<sup>55</sup> In 1893, Alavoine opened a New York office, Alavoine and Company, and in 1905, bought out Allard's business inventory in both New York and Paris.<sup>56</sup> This proved to be a wise professional strategy as Allard established a large American clientele and "[h]is books...carried the names of more than three hundred customers (who may have purchased a chair or a mirror) and clients (whose entire mansion he decorated for Hunt)."<sup>57</sup> The American subsidiary of Alavoine enjoyed much

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<sup>51</sup> James T. Maher, *The Twilight of Splendor: Chronicles of the Age of American Palaces* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975), p. 58;  
<http://www.onlinegalleries.com/artists/d/etiennesimoneugene-roudillon/14587>.

<sup>52</sup> Maher, p. 58.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 57.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

of the same prestige as Jules Allard and was considered the “leading palace decorators in America” before the turn of the century.<sup>58</sup> George and Florence Blumenthal would have been aware of Alavoine’s international reputation and its skill at decorating large estates filled with important works of art.

Joseph Livingston Cassidy, a clerk under Trowbridge and Livingston, was in charge of monitoring the erection and completion of the Blumenthal’s Park Avenue residence and looked after the house until George Blumenthal’s death.<sup>59</sup> While employees of an architectural firm surely understood the inner workings of a client’s home, this long-lasting relationship was likely unusual and rare since so few grand mansions on the Upper East Side survived into the latter half of the twentieth century. Arthur S. Vernay, an associate at the architectural firm of J. Armstrong Stenhouse, also designed and supervised the installation of both modern and antique interiors during construction, including the Spanish patio and staircase.<sup>60</sup>

Jacques Seligmann’s son and one of the Blumenthal’s principal dealers, Germain Seligman (he dropped the second *n* from his name when he became an American citizen), reported “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.”<sup>61</sup> Seligman’s quote illustrates the relationship between the architectural style of the Park Avenue house and the Blumenthal’s collecting. The Blumenthal house also showcased many other adapted pieces from their growing collection, such as tapestries, a Renaissance marble fountain (discussed in more detail below), and antique panelling.<sup>62</sup> Between 1917-1920, during the early years of decorating the new mansion, Florence Blumenthal acquired several antique French, English, and Italian works of art from the New York based dealers and decorators, P.W. French & Company (commonly known as French & Company), who worked with many

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<sup>58</sup> The American branch of Alavoine & Company was ultimately dissolved in 1965. *Ibid*, pp. 59, 350.

<sup>59</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>61</sup> Cleland, p. 84.

<sup>62</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

wealthy American collectors during this period.<sup>63</sup>

The Metropolitan Museum of Art archives reference that the design of the interiors was completed in collaboration with Florence Blumenthal.<sup>64</sup> Germain Seligman also credited Florence Blumenthal with creating impressive, yet intimately interiors in the New York house.<sup>65</sup> In his description of the sumptuous interiors of the Blumenthal's New York residence, Seligman again credited the talent of Mrs. Blumenthal:

Once inside, the impression of austerity was replaced by a world of imagination, far from the material bustle of New York. It was a dreamlike 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 oriental rugs. It is difficult to explain how so sumptuous and impressive a house could be so intimate; this was but one of the achievements of an extraordinary woman...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.<sup>66</sup>

First-hand accounts, like those of Seligman, not only detail the interior tranquility and highlight the talents of Florence Blumenthal, but also suggest that she may have had more direct contact with the designers and dealers involved in the planning and acquisitions for the Park Avenue home than her husband, George Blumenthal. (See Part 2B for more information on Florence Blumenthal's relationship with French dealers and decorators and her direct role in decorating the couple's French residences) This

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<sup>63</sup> The Blumenthals also sold furniture to French & Company during their move from West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street to Park Avenue. For a record of all of the Blumenthal's purchases, see "French & Company records, 1910-1998 (bulk 1950-1960)," Box 3, folders 2-4; Box 4, folder 3; and Box 6, folders 3-4, The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Los Angeles.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Jacques Seligmann was one of the preeminent Parisian dealers of the early twentieth-century, initially housed in a grand town house located on the Place Vendôme with his brothers, Arnold and Simon, ultimately purchasing the Hôtel de Sagan at 57 rue Saint-Dominique, built in 1784 for the Princess of Monaco. Seligman, pp. 142-143; Shelley M. Bennett. *The Art of Wealth: The Huntingtons in the Gilded Age* (Pasadena, California: The Huntington Library Press, 2013), p. 134.

<sup>66</sup> Seligman, pp. 142-143.

description also evokes the de Meyer photograph of Florence in her Renaissance velvet gown, previously described in Part 1. (See Fig. 40) The notion of living in a Renaissance style was perhaps the Blumenthal's way of animating the building and collection.

Both George and Florence Blumenthal had a close personal and business relationship with the dealer Jacques Seligmann, his brothers, Simon and Arnold, as well as Jacques' son, Germain. George Blumenthal and Jacques Seligmann were childhood friends and both attended the same school in Frankfurt.<sup>67</sup> Correspondence between the Blumenthals and Jacques Seligmann include topics other than art collecting and reveal a particular informality, ranging from advice about stocks to Jewish causes.<sup>68</sup>

#### Park Avenue Interiors and Collections:

Thanks to the compilation and survival of a photographic album entitled "The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York," detailed documentation of the interior architecture and decoration of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence survives. Through an analysis of the interiors represented in this album, I will illustrate how the house fostered the Blumenthal's ultimate goal of fulfilling their public philanthropy. I will also analyze the Blumenthal's collecting activity by placing them in the context of other collectors.

In *Art Collecting in the United States of America, An Outline of a History*, W.G. Constable argues that collectors are inspired by one or more of the same motives, ranging from pure greed and pride in possession, love for and interest in the objects collected, patronage and encouragement of the arts, and a wish to instruct and benefit the public.<sup>69</sup> Within this established framework, I will argue that the Blumenthals fit into the latter three categories by demonstrating a love for and interest in their collection, focusing on patronage and encouragement of the arts, and a wish to instruct and benefit the public. They were part of the collecting generation, with a wide range of interests, who believed in the American tradition that their collection should ultimately be bequeathed to the

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<sup>67</sup> Cleland, p. 153.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Constable, p. I.



public.<sup>70</sup> Unlike contemporary ‘robber barons’ who built museums for their private collections and later opened them to the public, the Blumenthals instead built their home and installed their collection with the public in mind.<sup>71</sup> Their desire to display art for the education of the public demonstrates that the Blumenthals were not simply following the examples of other notable collectors of the late nineteenth century who were motivated by exhibiting their financial success, princely lifestyle, and social position, but they understood that their art collection also carried a philanthropic function. They both strongly believed that art collections were designed for the education of the public and the study of the arts, and should therefore be open to visitors, thus consistent with a shift in collecting practices in America in the late nineteenth century, as discussed in Michaël Vottero’s “To Collect and Conquer: American Collections in the Gilded Age” (2013).<sup>72</sup>

In 1928, the Blumenthals commissioned female photographer, Mattie Edwards Hewitt (1869-1956), to photograph the Blumenthal’s Park Avenue residence.<sup>73</sup> Although the details of the commission are not known, Hewitt may have been recommended to the couple by Trowbridge & Livingston, for whom Hewitt photographed their earlier buildings in New York.<sup>74</sup> She was also credited with knowing “how to play up sleek interiors” of the lavish homes belonging to the era’s rich and famous.<sup>75</sup> Hewitt’s photographs were later published in 1930 in articles on the Blumenthal’s residence in *Town & Country* and *International Studio*.<sup>76</sup> Although we have no concrete evidence, it is likely that the creation of this album and publication of these articles were intended to showcase the Blumenthal mansion in a public arena in preparation for the Blumenthal’s

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 99.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Shnayerson, “Inside the Private Museums of Billionaire Art Collectors,” *Town & Country Magazine* (January 16, 2017), <http://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/a9124/private-museums-of-billionaires/>

<sup>72</sup> Michaël Vottero, “To Collect and Conquer: American Collections in the Gilded Age,” *Transatlantica* [online], 1 | 2013, p. 8, <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/6492>.

<sup>73</sup> Grace Glueck, “Photography Review, Women Who Focused Lenses on Old New York,” *New York Times* (April 4, 2003).

<sup>74</sup> See Mary N. Woods, *Beyond the Architect’s Eye: Photographs and the American Built Environment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 90.

<sup>75</sup> Glueck, “Photography Review, Women Who Focused Lenses on Old New York.”

<sup>76</sup> See Augusta Patterson, “The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal,” *Town & Country* (March 1, 1930), pp. 61-70; 108; and Augusta Patterson, “Decoration: Furniture in the Blumenthal Collection,” *International Studio* (November 1930), pp. 44-49.

transfer of the house and contents to the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a branch of the Museum.<sup>77</sup> (The bequest will be discussed in more detail in Part 3 of this thesis) It has been noted that the ordering and selecting of interior pictures of the home was not an arbitrary activity during this period and album building was a means of immortalizing the quotidian experience of being at home and allowed the owner to create a narrative and identity.<sup>78</sup> The album remained in the family and was passed down to Florence's niece, Margaret Liebman Berger, who presented it, with her husband Charles J. Liebman, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1975 in memory of Florence and George Blumenthal.<sup>79</sup>

Figure 52 illustrates a first-floor plan of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue mansion. The principal focus of the house was the renowned two-story covered and cloistered Spanish courtyard that featured a fifteenth-century marble fountain, originally made for the courtyard of Jacopo de' Pazzi's Florentine palace. (See Figs. 53a-b) The fountain had long been attributed to the work of Donatello, beginning with its early description in Vasari's second volume of "Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects."<sup>80</sup> Presumably around the time of the Blumenthals' acquisition, the fountain was re-attributed to the work of Antonio Rossellino by the German art historian and curator, Dr. Wilhelm von Bode.<sup>81</sup> Shortly after its bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1941, further research likely revealed that the fountain was in fact designed by the architect Giuliano da Maiano and made by the sculptors Benedetto and Giovanni da Maiano of Naples.<sup>82</sup> Many dealers during this period often embellished (or merely invented) the attribution or provenance of a work of art in order to sell to wealthy American clients, like the Blumenthals, and it was only when donations or bequests

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<sup>77</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art's board officially accepted the Blumenthal's bequest to maintain the house and contents as a branch of the Museum in 1930 and formal discussions about the reorganization of the house as a museum occurred in 1932. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>78</sup> Notes from Leora Auslander's keynote address "What made a Jewish country home Jewish?", Jewish Country House conference, The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, Oxford University, March 6, 2018, <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/what-made-jewish-country-home-jewish>

<sup>79</sup> See "The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York," Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>80</sup> Patterson, "The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal," p. 63.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*; object file for 41.190.471, European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

entered a public institution that additional research by museum curators and new conservation technology was frequently conducted.

Similarly to how it must have been originally displayed in the fifteenth-century Florentine palace courtyard, the fountain's calm effect created an urban retreat amidst the bustling noise of the city and was a greatly admired feature of the Blumenthal house, as recounted in an article on the Blumenthal's home featured in *Town & Country* in 1930:

Here Park Avenue, with its streams of automobiles, New York with its subways, its thin, ambitious towers, its noise and its excitement, is non-existent. There is no sound but the dripping water in the central fountain.<sup>83</sup>

The *Town & Country* article references the Blumenthal's generosity in lending many of their paintings to museum exhibitions and portrays art collecting in a positive light, perhaps also foreshadowing the ultimate public destiny of the collection.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to serenity, the Blumenthal's installation of an indoor fountain was likely a deliberate message meant to convey a private palace of art. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, collector and philanthropist, Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924), and artist, Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), both showcased indoor fountains in the entries of their homes. Several scholars have recounted how renowned female collector, Isabella Stewart Gardner, created a 'period' courtyard at Fenway Court in Boston.<sup>85</sup> Completed in 1902 and designed to house her extensive art collection, Fenway Court contains galleries and passageways surrounding a great central court, constructed of Venetian Gothic architectural fragments, selected by Gardner herself, and fused together as a whole.<sup>86</sup> Today, as in Gardner's lifetime, the courtyard is filled with flowers, shrubs, and climbing plants enclosing a central mosaic pavement, as well as a seventeenth-

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<sup>83</sup> Patterson, "The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal," 63.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> See W.G. Constable, *Art Collecting in the United States of America, An Outline of a History* (London and New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1964); Aline B. Saarinen, *The Proud Possessors: The lives, times and tastes of some adventurous American art collectors* (New York: Random House, 1958); Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>86</sup> Constable, p. 48.

century Venetian fountain that contributes to the serene atmosphere, much like the Blumenthal's home.<sup>87</sup> (See Fig. 54)

In addition to a unique interplay combining works of art and architectural elements and an oasis from the busy urban streets, the Blumenthal's Spanish Patio also provided a central focal point from the neighboring rooms and upper levels of the house. The Blumenthals may have modeled the design and function of their patio on Gardner's tranquil courtyard that also served as a space for psychic repose, reflection and creative self-expression.<sup>88</sup> Although there is no concrete evidence that the Blumenthals ever visited Fenway Court, it is extremely likely that Gardner's house museum, with its central garden courtyard featuring a mix of Roman, Medieval, and Renaissance sculpture and fountain bordered by surrounding galleries, served as a model for the Blumenthals. George and Florence Blumenthal also emulated Gardner's predilection for collecting a broad array of works by using period architectural fragments, such as columns, capitals, reliefs, balconies, fountains, and ceilings, as well as Italian Renaissance furniture and decoration, including cassone and candelabra, in both their New York and Paris residences.<sup>89</sup>

The end walls of the courtyard were covered with two sixteenth-century Brussels tapestries depicting the story of Mercury and Herse from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and an early sixteenth-century Spanish pulpit was placed next to the tapestry along the east side of the room.<sup>90</sup> (See Fig. 55) A collection of Renaissance cassone, fifteenth-century iron candelabra (a selection of which are today on display at the Cloisters Museum in New York), and several large sculptures on pedestals were positioned along the perimeter of the lower level of the courtyard. The walls were decorated with sixteenth-century limestone busts, a fifteenth-century stucco relief depicting a Virgin and Child, and a

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p. 176.

<sup>88</sup> Macleod, p. 89.

<sup>89</sup> René Brimo (translated and edited by Kenneth Haltman), *The Evolution of Taste in American Collecting* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2016), p. 190. Based on archival records, we do know that Florence Blumenthal went to Boston for two weeks in March 1917. Duveen Brothers Records MF 466, Box 353, Folder 8, Reel #208 "Papers Regarding Scouts, Dealers, Restorers, and Collectors, 1910-1965," INHA Paris.

<sup>90</sup> Patterson, "The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal," p. 64.

sixteenth-century silk cope. The niches next to the stairwell were also decorated with sculpture, including a sixteenth-century marble of Bacchus. The south wall contained six windows framed in carved marble surrounds from the Castle of Vélez Blanco and a plaque with the coat of arms of Fajardo Y Chacon, which was originally mounted high on the exterior wall of the castle tower overlooking the patio. While the combination of Renaissance furniture, lighting, and Flemish tapestries was typical of contemporary taste during this period, as exemplified by J.P. Morgan, Henry Clay Frick, and Robert Lehman, it was the Blumenthal's incorporation of architectural elements as the framework for the collections, as well as the complete integration of art and architecture, that was different and unique.

The Blumenthals often used the main courtyard as one of the principal rooms for entertaining. In a letter dated December 25, 1923 from New York socialite, Julia Gardiner Gayley (1864-1937), to her eldest daughter, Mary Gayley Senni (1884-1971), a countess who lived in Rome, she described a party given by George Blumenthal in his Park Avenue house:

I have just driven home...from George Blumenthal's astonishing Gothic house...Gerry was simply "ebloui"--he couldn't get over it. The house is a great court three stories high with corridors all around it & rooms opening off-lit generally by wax candles, fountains very softly playing--servants moving about very discreetly with two or three glasses of champagne or lemonade—the best organist from Paris playing & today, a big French pianist also—I told Blumenthal to take Aileen up into the little carved stone pulpit & sing—and it was glorious.<sup>91</sup>

This mother-daughter correspondence not only provides an intimate and unfiltered view of life in New York during the 1920s, but also serves as a rare firsthand account of a social gathering at the Blumenthal's Park Avenue home. Julia Gardiner Gayley's depiction of the house as "dazzling" is punctuated by the impressive nature of the Spanish patio and atmospheric surroundings of fountains, candlelight and music. The Blumenthal's passion for organ music and hosting concerts foreshadows the construction of their Gothic room in Paris, discussed in more detail in Part 2B. This review must have

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<sup>91</sup> Object file for 41.190.482, European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

been quite a compliment coming from such a seasoned hostess, like Gayley, who was known for organizing regular lunch and dinner parties at her home on Washington Square for a diverse group architects, artists, collectors, politicians, and nobility.<sup>92</sup>

It was during the 1920s that the Blumenthals began to open their home and collection to a museum audience, hosting frequent receptions for Metropolitan Museum of Art staff, and blurring the lines between home and museum.<sup>93</sup> Following such events, Florence Blumenthal often received thank you letters from socialite visitors praising her for the “beauty” and “harmony” of the decoration of her Park Avenue home, even referring to their palazzo as “the dream house.”<sup>94</sup> The Blumenthals became accustomed to entertaining important guests and art connoisseurs, and in April 1922, the couple hosted approximately thirty members of the Association of Art Museum Directors at the request of Metropolitan Museum of Art’s director, Joseph Breck, to visit their collection while in New York for meetings.<sup>95</sup> This early treatment of the Blumenthal’s residence as an extension of the Museum demonstrates the couple’s desire to use the home for public use and showcase the collection.

Adjacent to the courtyard on the east side of ground floor was a wood-panelled ballroom in the eighteenth-century Venetian-style, decorated between 1919-1920 by Armand-Albert Rateau following his departure from Alavoine et Cie.<sup>96</sup> (See Figs. 56a-b; more information on Rateau’s work for the Meyer family will be discussed later in this chapter and in Part 2B) The ballroom was decorated with mirrored doors, over doors featuring

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<sup>92</sup> Margaret A. Brucia, “Archer Huntington’s Divorce,” *Gotham, A Blog for Scholars of New York City History* (September 9, 2017), <https://www.gothamcenter.org/blog/archer-huntingtons-divorce>.

<sup>93</sup> A reception for twenty-five members of Museum staff occurred in March 1925. MMA Archives, Joseph Breck Records, 1916-1951, Box 7 Folder 14.

<sup>94</sup> Ruth Osborne, “Breathing Life Back into the *Ancien Régime*: The Origins, Reappropriation, and Modern Museum Installation of Furniture from the Château de Saint-Cloud” (Bard College, April 2012), p. 30.

<sup>95</sup> Joseph Breck Records, MMA Archives, Box 7 Folder 13.

<sup>96</sup> Meeting the Blumenthals on an ocean liner on his way back from Paris to New York in 1919 gave Rateau time to discuss and envision the couple’s idea for the ballroom (and lower-level pool) in their Park Avenue home. Wendy Moonan, “A New Sheen for an Art Deco Designer,” *The New York Times* (September 10, 2004), <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/10/arts/design/a-new-sheen-for-an-art-deco-designer.html>.

Louis XV-style masks and garlands, a set of French tapestries depicting floral bouquets and garlands, a large carpet, piano, two pairs of chandeliers, and a select grouping of sculpture, including a marble bust of Louis XV by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne the Younger placed on a gilt wood console table, and an Italian seventeenth-century marble statue of Orpheus in front of a window at one end.<sup>97</sup>

Surrounding the perimeter of the ballroom was a large suite of furniture, including eight armchairs, twenty side chairs, two banquettes, and four settees, of which three armchairs, two side chairs, and one settee were late eighteenth-century Venetian, and the remaining five armchairs, eighteen side chairs, and three settees were reproduced by Rateau after an eighteenth-century Venetian model.<sup>98</sup> Recent documentation uncovered in Paris confirms that, around 1920, Rateau enlarged the suite of Italian furniture originally acquired by the Blumenthals at the same moment that he designed the six patinated bronze armchairs for the couple's lower level pool on Park Avenue.<sup>99</sup> (See below for more about the Blumenthal's indoor pool for the suite of bronze furniture by Rateau) (Figs. 57a-b illustrates a similar model of Venetian chairs in Rateau's Paris workshop) This highly decorative ballroom and large suite of sitting furniture and piano reinforces the Blumenthals penchant for entertaining, concerts, and social gatherings.

Rateau was undoubtedly exposed to the practice of interior decoration for both historic and modern interiors, a network of skilled craftsmen, and an extensive collection of eighteenth-century models of seat furniture during an apprenticeship early in his career with the Parisian decorator, ceramicist, and collector, Georges Hoentschel (1855-

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<sup>97</sup> In a letter to George Blumenthal dated March 1919, then curator of European decorative arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Joseph Breck, wrote that he inquired whether Mitchell Samuels of French & Company could locate Venetian chandeliers large enough for the Blumenthal's ballroom. It is possible that the Blumenthals purchased the rock crystal chandeliers (possibly French seventeenth century) from French & Company and which Breck references. Joseph Breck Records, MMA Archives Box 7 Folder12; "The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, fifty East Seventieth Street, New York."

<sup>98</sup> The suite of original eighteenth-century Venetian furniture was bequeathed to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York by George Blumenthal in 1941 where it remains today, (inv. nos. 41.100.293-41.100.298).

<sup>99</sup> Galerie Anne-Sophie Duval archives, Paris.

1915).<sup>100</sup> Rateau was also exposed to Hoentschel's sophisticated international clientele, such as the Duchess of Alba and Baron and Baroness Eugène de Rothschild, that would prepare him for his work at Alavoine et Cie. and for his historic and modern designs for the Blumenthals.<sup>101</sup> It was likely Rateau's inspiration of historical sources, coupled with his interest in a modern aesthetic, that appealed to George and Florence Blumenthal.<sup>102</sup> Rateau's son, François, appropriately categorized his father's work as "[r]espectful of classical tradition [and]...a delicate aesthetic interpretation in which [historic] influences were blended with his own highly personal modern style."<sup>103</sup>

Rateau was born in Paris to a family of craftsmen and studied drawing, sculpture, and woodcarving, starting at just twelve years of age, between 1894-1898 at the École Boulle, known for its technical training in cabinetmaking.<sup>104</sup> Following the completion of his artistic training in 1898, he was employed by the decorator, collector, and ceramicist Georges Hoentschel at his firm Maison Leys, the foremost interior decoration firm of turn-of-the-century Paris, with whom he collaborated for the design of the Art Nouveau interior of the pavilion of the Union des Arts Décoratifs at the 1900 International Exposition in Paris.<sup>105</sup> As mentioned above, Rateau was undoubtedly exposed to both historic and modern interiors, as well as the practice of interior decoration, through Hoentschel's mastery of both traditional and contemporary design.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Rateau would have felt a strong affinity for the eighteenth-century and was also a collector of eighteenth-century French prints that he likely used as inspiration for ornaments in his own designs. Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide and Ulrich Leben, "Georges Hoentschel and his World," *The Magazine Antiques* (March/April 2013), posted April 3, 2013:

<http://www.themagazineantiques.com/articles/georges-hoentschel-and-his-world/>; Notes from interview with New York art dealer Louis Bofferding, January 23, 2018.

<sup>101</sup> Wendy Moonan, "A New Sheen for an Art Deco Designer," *The New York Times* (September 10, 2004), <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/10/arts/design/a-new-sheen-for-an-art-deco-designer.html>.

<sup>102</sup> James N. Carder ed., *A Home of the Humanities, The Collecting and Patronage of Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), p. 98.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102; François Rateau, "Forward," in Alistair Duncan, *A.A. Rateau* (New York: The DeLorenzo Gallery, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> Duncan, p. 11; Carder, p. 97; "A byzantine bathroom by Armand-Albert Rateau," Press Release by Galerie Anne-Sophie Duval (2016), p. 4.

<sup>105</sup> Duncan, p. 11; Roberta Smith, "You Might Call Him the Decorator of the Met, 'Salvaging the Past,' on Hoentschel, at Bard Graduate Center," *The New York Times*, May 9, 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Jared Goss, *French Art Deco* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2014), p. 177.



In 1905, at the age of twenty-three, Rateau was appointed artistic director of the Parisian interior design firm Maison Alavoine et Cie. that specialized in period-revival style for home furnishings and decoration which provided a valuable introduction to an elite, international clientele, like the Blumenthals, for which the firm was commissioned to decorate private and commercial townhouses, country residences, and hotels.<sup>107</sup> Other important clients of Alavoine included the international art dealers, Jacques Seligmann & Co., who may have made the initial introduction to the Blumenthals.<sup>108</sup> In 1914, Rateau took temporary leave from his senior position at Alavoine in order to enlist in the army. Upon returning to Paris in 1918, he resigned from the firm definitively in 1919, most likely eager to establish himself as an independent interior decorator following the war.<sup>109</sup> In 1920, Rateau established his own showroom on boulevard Berthier in Paris, under the title “*Architecte Décorateur*,” and launched his own workshop in 1922 in Levallois-Perret, a suburb northwest of Paris, with approximately two hundred craftsmen to manufacture his designs for architectural paneling, furniture, textiles, lighting fixtures, and small decorative objects.<sup>110</sup>

Referred to as a “neo-classical modernist,” Rateau designed bronze furniture, lighting, and decorative accessories with forms and decorative motifs inspired from ancient Roman antiquity which he witnessed first-hand in the spring of 1914 during his visit to southern Italy, notably Naples and Pompeii, while his wooden furniture models drew inspiration from late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century French furniture.<sup>111</sup> He also employed lavish materials, such as ivory, alabaster, ivory, and black marble.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Duncan, pp. 12, 21.

<sup>108</sup> Washington, D.C. collectors, Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss, also likely introduced to Rateau by the dealer Seligmann, commissioned Rateau to design select interiors for their Dumbarton Oaks residence in the 1920s. Goss, p. 177.

<sup>109</sup> Duncan, p. 12.

<sup>110</sup> Carder, p. 97; Duncan, p. 39; “A byzantine bathroom by Armand-Albert Rateau,” p. 4; Goss, p. 178.

<sup>111</sup> Rateau travelled to southern Italy with a group of friends, including jeweler Louis Cartier. Franck Olivier-Vial, “Rateau un Baroque chez les Modernes,” *Estampille*, Number 265 (January 1993), p. 49; Duncan, p. 37; Goss, p. 179.

<sup>112</sup> Duncan, p. 42.

Although Rateau remained extremely discreet and independent, never joining professional organizations or displaying his work at the Salons, he nevertheless developed a small, loyal, international clientele that responded to his personal vision of modern design.<sup>113</sup> Some of his most prominent clients included couturier, Jeanne Lavnin, the Spanish Duke and Duchess of Alba, and Cole and Linda Porter in Paris.<sup>114</sup> These celebrities were at the center of contemporary fashion, music, and culture, as well as international royalty, and provide a framework to more clearly position the Blumenthals.

Current literature recounts that George and Florence Blumenthal met Rateau in 1919 by chance while aboard the ocean liner *La Savoie* travelling from France to the New York, however this story is often repeated without a primary source.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, the decorator played an important role for the Blumenthals during this period, perhaps more than any other architect or dealer. Rateau's position as a decorator and designer, not dealer, likely explains how he was able to develop such a trustworthy and close-working relationship with the Blumenthals, in contrast to other decorators who also served as both dealers and advisors. The Blumenthals would later commission Rateau to decorate their Château de Malbosc near Grasse between 1925-26.<sup>116</sup> (See Part 2B for more information on Rateau's background and his work for the Blumenthals' French residences)

Rateau participated in the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris (*Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*) where he designed the display furniture and mannequins in the Pavillon de L'Élégance for the haute couture fashion houses, such as Lanvin, Worth, Poiret, Callot, Vionnet, and Schiaparelli, which brought him widespread recognition.<sup>117</sup> Rateau's

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<sup>113</sup> Goss, p. 177.

<sup>114</sup> See Olivier-Vial and Rateau, pp. 14-52; 58-69; 140-141.

<sup>115</sup> Olivier-Vial and Rateau, p. 88; "DeLorenzo: Thirty Years, Evening Sale," Christie's New York (December 14, 2010), p. 14; Moonan, "A New Sheen for an Art Deco Designer."

<sup>116</sup> Olivier-Vial and Rateau, pp. 132-133.

<sup>117</sup> Carder, p. 97; Duncan, p. 23; Joanna Banham ed., *Encyclopedia of Interior Design* (London; Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997, p. 1031; Goss, p. 178. Rateau's success at the 1925 International Exhibition also led to the inclusion of a selection of his work in an exhibition of progressive French art that traveled to eight museums in the United States that same year, resulting in the acquisition of two of his pieces by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was at this

international publicity no doubt helped attract new clients, and by 1930, he relocated his showroom to a private townhouse at 17, quai de Conti in Paris.<sup>118</sup> Because Rateau was an independent designer, and thus ineligible to formally exhibit in pavilions of design associations, he showcased some of his earlier designs, including the bathroom of the Duchess of Alba, at the Place Vendôme gallery of the brothers, Jacques, Arnold, and Simon Seligmann, during the time of the International Exposition, again highlighting the interconnected relationship between Rateau, the Seligmann dealers, and the Blumenthals.<sup>119</sup> The Blumenthal's close relationship with Rateau, before the height of his international fame and success, illustrates the couple's interest in contemporary modern design and situates them among the avant-garde collectors of the period.

Also on the first floor of the Park Avenue house was a dining room decorated with a mezzanine-level minstrel's gallery highlighting a late fourteenth-century Italian "Trinity" painting by Agnolo Gaddi and a late fifteenth-century South Netherlandish tapestry depicting the Lamentation below, both part of the Blumenthal bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art today. (See Figs. 58a-b) The painting, probably part of a triptych, was acquired through the dealer, Frederick Mason Perkins, who fostered the Blumenthals' taste for religious paintings.<sup>120</sup> Perhaps the Blumenthal's initial temporary residence on West 46<sup>th</sup> Street (discussed earlier in this chapter), decorated with tapestries, served as an early model for its decoration.

Figure 59 illustrates a plan of the second floor of the Blumenthal's residence. Similar to the first floor, the rooms on the second floor were organized around the perimeter of the patio (see Figs. 60a-b). The second storey Spanish patio framed a collection of Italian

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exhibition that Metropolitan Museum of Art curator, Joseph Breck, first saw a dressing table by Rateau (inv. no. 25.169) and acquired it for the Museum. In gratitude, Rateau subsequently gifted the hand mirror (inv. no. 25.170) to the Museum for their collection. Goss, p. 180; Duncan, p. 28.

<sup>118</sup> "A byzantine bathroom by Armand-Albert Rateau," p. 4.

<sup>119</sup> Rateau exhibited his designs at the Seligmann gallery from June 1-15, 1925 that were met with tremendous praise. Goss, p. 178; Carder, p. 97; Duncan, p. 23; Albert Flament, "Salle de Bains Moderne," *La Renaissance de l'art français et des industries de luxe*, (May, 1925), p. 234.

<sup>120</sup> Fausto Nicolai, "'Primitives' in America, Frederick Mason Perkins and the Early Renaissance Italian paintings in the Lehman and Blumenthal collections," *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 31 no. 1 (2019), pp. 131-132.

Renaissance cassone topped with maiolica jars, tapestries displayed on the walls, and a large seventeenth-century medallion carpet from Ushak in western Anatolia that hung vertically over the patio above the doorway to the courtyard.<sup>121</sup> (See Fig. 53a)

Rooms on the second floor included a velvet-walled salon, or drawing room, decorated with a paneled ceiling, Corinthian capitals, stained glass panels inserted into two windows, Renaissance furniture, two glass chandeliers, and sixteenth-century Italian paintings, including a painting of Adonis by Girolamo di Tiziano (previously attributed to Titian at the time of the Blumenthal's acquisition) and Tintoretto's "Portrait of a Man," both part of the 1941 Blumenthal Bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>122</sup> (See Figs. 61a-b) The Blumenthal bequest will be discussed in more detail in Part 3. Six late Renaissance tapestry-woven cushion covers depicting the Story of Abraham, purchased with the intent to enter the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, were also used as decorative throw pillows of the salon.<sup>123</sup> The carefully planned design of this velvet-lined room highlights the Blumenthal's passion for Renaissance art and textiles and integration of architectural elements, such as stained glass panels, but also demonstrates that the Blumenthals were collecting for the Museum from the beginning.

The second floor also contained George Blumenthal's study decorated with a painted ceiling in the Italian style, a French stone mantelpiece depicting the arms of Pierre II, Duke of Bourbon and of Anne of France, daughter of Louis XI, and furnished with

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<sup>121</sup> See illustrations in George Blumenthal, *The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York*; John Russell, "Art: Small Met Show Highlights Acquisitions," *The New York Times* (May 25, 1984), <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/05/25/arts/art-small-met-show-highlights-acquisitions.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>122</sup> Patterson, "The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal," pp. 66-67; Old Master Paintings sale, Palais Dorotheum, Vienna (October 18, 2016), lot 227. Tintoretto's "Portrait of a Man" was previously attributed to Titian by Dr. Wilhelm von Bode and is published as such in Stella Rubinstein-Bloch's *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal*, vol. 1, pl. XLV. It was later attributed to the work of Leander Bassano by 1930. The Metropolitan Museum of Art re-attributed the painting of Adonis as "Follower of Titian" and later de-accessioned the painting.

<sup>123</sup> The six tapestry-woven cushions covers were the subject of an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York entitled "Examining Opulence, A Set of Renaissance Tapestry Cushions," August 4, 2014-January 18, 2015, <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2014/tapestry-curators-conservators>.

sixteenth-century Venetian andirons, as well as other important bronzes, French Renaissance furniture, and paintings, including an Annunciation from the school of Fra Angelico, and a lunette depicting The Virgin and Child between Saint Francis and Saint Anthony, formerly part of a four-paneled alter-piece from 1502 painted by Cima da Conegliano, later donated by George Blumenthal to the Library of Hertford House (the Wallace Collection) in London in 1933 to be reunited with its central panel depicting Saint Catherine of Alexandria.<sup>124</sup> (See Fig. 62)

In contrast to the more austere Italian Renaissance style of the public rooms on the first and second floors of the house, the third floor, housing George and Florence Blumenthal's private living quarters, was furnished in a lighter, French mid-eighteenth-century style, similar to the king and queen's private apartments in a royal chateau, one of which was perhaps used as a model. The entry to the third floor included a Louis XVI-style boiserie sky lit hallway featuring the full-length portrait of Florence Blumenthal, painted by Giovanni Boldini in 1912, and a select group of eighteenth-century French furniture leading to Florence Blumenthal's suite, which consisted of a bedroom, dressing room, and boudoir, each paneled and furnished with fine French furniture.<sup>125</sup> (See Figs. 38a and 63)

Mrs. Blumenthal's bedroom contained wood panelling, two large inset mirrors, over-doors decorated in faux-marble, a silk canopy bed, and a select grouping of French furniture, including a console table decorated with a twentieth-century terracotta bust after Pajou, a chaise longue covered in a fur blanket, various *chiffoniers* (small chests of drawers) and side tables, a mantelpiece decorated with a pair of candelabra and a terracotta sculpture of a little child by Pigalle, and surrounded by an embroidered fire screen and two armchairs. (See Figs. 64a-b)

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<sup>124</sup> Augusta Owen Patterson, "The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal," p. 68; Augusta Owen Patterson, "Furniture in the Blumenthal Collection," p. 44; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives; object file for P1-1a, Wallace Collection, London.

<sup>125</sup> Kathrens, vol. I, pp. 299-301.

Bedrooms decorated in the French style were fashionable during this period and the Palace of Versailles influenced the decoration of many mansions in America beginning in the Gilded Age and continued well into the twentieth century.<sup>126</sup> Florence's bedroom is similar in style to the Manhattan bedroom of collector and philanthropist, Marjorie Merriweather Post, decorated in the 1920s, that she later replicated at her estate at Hillwood in Washington D.C. in the 1950s. (See Figs. 65a-b)

Florence Blumenthal's dressing room contained trompe l'oeil decoration on the walls and over-doors, a grouping of Louis XVI furniture including a commode, settee, chairs, and two dog beds, as well as a fireplace decorated with a Louis XVI Sèvres porcelain and gilt-bronze clock by Falconet and a pair of two-handled nineteenth-century covered porcelain vases. (See Fig. 66)

The boudoir, or sitting room, featured several pieces of antique and modern Louis XVI style furniture, boiseries, and decorative objects, including a desk and matching filing shelf (*cartonnier*), featuring a picture of their son, George Jr.; a writing table topped with a small marble bust on pedestal, a pair of candlesticks, and a pair of eighteenth-century Sèvres flower pots; a pair of small console tables and mirrors; and several armchairs and stools. (See Fig. 67a) Perhaps most importantly, the boudoir contained a suite of furniture made by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené for Marie-Antoinette's dressing room (*cabinet de toilette*) at Saint-Cloud in 1788, including an armchair, an upholstered fire screen with an original show cover (believed to have been embroidered by Marie-Antoinette herself), and a daybed.<sup>127</sup> (See Fig. 67b) The decoration of Florence's bedroom suite reveals her

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<sup>126</sup> Notes from Tom Stammers' paper "The Sterns, the Singers and Cross-Cultural Exchanges," Jewish Country House conference, The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, Oxford University, March 6, 2018, <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/sterns-singers-and-cross-cultural-exchanges>. Other examples include Lady Fitzgerald (1858-1947), born Amelia Catherine Bischoffsheim, who recreated a version of Queen Marie-Antoinette's bedroom from Versailles during the 1908 additions at Buckland House in Oxfordshire, as well as cereal heiress, Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887-1973), who decorated her bedroom suite in the French Louis XVI style, both in her Manhattan penthouse apartment where she lived from 1925-1941, and later at Hillwood Estate in Washington D.C., which she purchased in 1955.

<sup>127</sup> The Blumenthals purchased this suite of French royal furniture at the sale of the Marquis de Casaux at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris in 1923 and is conserved today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (41.205.1–.3a, b). A suite of French late eighteenth-century carved and

personal passion for eighteenth-century French works of art and for displaying and using pieces of furniture commissioned by Queen Marie-Antoinette for her most intimate of rooms. The social interactions with these pieces of furniture will be discussed in more detail in Part 3.

In contrast to the French neoclassical-style furnishings of these intimate rooms, Florence Blumenthal's bathroom separating her bedroom and dressing room was decorated in the English Adam style with marble and mosaic floors, a vaulted ceiling decorated with Etruscan-style decoration (echoing the marble floor design), and was furnished with a small makeup table, armchair, stool, small screen with a shelf for accessories, as well as a marble tub. (See Fig. 68)

The English Adam style was reflected in early American Federal architecture and often appeared in spaces for entertaining in American Gilded Age mansions at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>128</sup> Marjorie Merriweather Post's "Adam Bedroom" first conceived in the 1920s for her Long Island estate, also called Hillwood, then later transferred to her final residence at Hillwood Estate in Washington D.C. in the mid-1950s, illustrates the lasting interest in the neoclassical English style and the important role that the decoration of rooms in different styles continued to play in American houses into the mid-twentieth century.<sup>129</sup> None of the publications featuring the Blumenthal's New York mansion from 1930 illustrate Florence's Adam-style bathroom, or any of her other intimate sitting or dressing rooms, suggesting that they were only seen by members of her closest circle.

In both their New York and Grasse residences, with the assistance of Alavoine and Rateau, the Blumenthals created extremely sumptuous bathrooms, reflecting Rateau's "neo-classical modernist" esthetic featuring neoclassical sources of inspiration and luxurious materials contrasted by modern technologies of the day. Rateau was

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painted furniture made by Sulpice Brizard (see Fig. 64a) is also conserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (41.100.346; 69.102.1-3).

<sup>128</sup> Arnold Lewis, James Turner, and Steven McQuillin, *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age: All 203 Photographs from Artistic Houses*: With New Text (New York: Dover, 1987), p. 110.

<sup>129</sup> Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Archives.

accustomed to commissioning elegant private dressing rooms and bathrooms for his most important female clients, including fashioner designer Jeanne Lanvin in Paris and the Duchess of Alba in Madrid, both in the early 1920s. These initial commissions, along with the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence, were among Rateau's first projects as an independent designer.<sup>130</sup> By the time Rateau had completed his designs for the Blumenthal's Château de Malbosc, bathrooms were still a relatively modern invention. It was only in the early twentieth century that private homes could access a main source of water and hot water systems and, although they gradually become more common in modern buildings, private residential bathrooms remained an exception until World War II.<sup>131</sup> (See Part 2B for more information on Rateau's work for the Blumenthal's French residences)

Also on the third floor was George Blumenthal's Louis XVI-style panelled bedroom, furnished with a bed placed against the wall, side table, couch, armchairs, and desk (see Fig. 69); his bath and dressing room; a breakfast room, featuring an eighteenth-century Flemish tapestry of "The Harvest," a round dining table with four upholstered chairs, a Louis XV commode, a fireplace and fire screen below a standing portrait of George Blumenthal by Adolphe Déchenaud, discussed in Part 1, (see Fig. 70); a gothic-style den; and assorted guest accommodations, including a sitting room and guest bedroom.<sup>132</sup>

The fourth floor of the house, reserved for service quarters, featured a series of small rooms, approximately twenty-five in number, and including a valet's room, housekeeper's sitting room, sewing room, trunk room, and assorted bathrooms and linen closets.<sup>133</sup> (See Fig. 71) The fifth and upper floor of the house consisted of attic space, a roof deck, a waterproof sky lit conservatory, and a waterproof sky lit greenhouse, likely

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<sup>130</sup> See "The Collection of the Duchess of Alba," Christie's Paris, May 23, 2013.

<sup>131</sup> "A byzantine bathroom by Armand-Albert Rateau," pp. 14; 18.

<sup>132</sup> Déchenaud's portrait of George Blumenthal was exhibited at the Seligmann gallery in New York in 1924. "A Distinguished Company of Men in Portrait Exhibition by Notable Artists--Paintings and Sculpture Shown in Group at Seligmann's--Notes of the Galleries," *New York Evening Post*, December 6, 1924, p. 11; Jacques Seligmann & Co., *Art patrons of America: loan exhibition of modern portraits, painting and sculpture for the benefit of the State Charities Aid Association*, December 1st to 13th, 1924; Kathrens, vol. I, pp. 295-304; MMA Archives B6273 Office of the Secretary Correspondence Files, 1870-1950.

<sup>133</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.



used as a hot house for flowers instead of leisure.<sup>134</sup> This was a rare feature as most mansions in the neighborhood had street-level gardens.

The main feature of the basement level of the Park Avenue house was a swimming pool with decorative wall murals (Figs. 72a-c) completed around 1920 by the contemporary artist Paul Thévenaz (1891-1921), colorfully described in a record of the artist's work:

Another masterpiece is the private swimming pool of Mrs. George Blumenthal's New York home. The bare walls surrounding the pool have been transformed into a gorgeous, poetic sea garden. Against an aqua-marine background of undersea tone, float myriad-colored sea anemones, glittering shoals of deep-sea fish, tall iridescent water flowers, great jeweled shells and dreaming mermaids with long tresses of seaweed texture. Corals, greens, pinks and blues, and rhythm in every detail! Here a phantom ship appears wrecked upon rocky depths, in a vivid mass of starfish. A great translucent octopus coils and uncoils below a little sea child clinging to an overhanging rock and gleefully deriding all danger. In this swimming pool, as in much of his work, Mr. Thévenaz reveled in the exotic, the foreign, the imaginative!...he infused into one painting all that the varied musical instruments could bring into a symphony.<sup>135</sup>

The reference to "Mrs. George Blumenthal's New York home" implies that the commission of the wall murals was likely the idea of Florence Blumenthal, reflecting her interest in contemporary art and her patronage of young artists. (See Part 3 for more information on Florence Blumenthal's support of young, contemporary artists and the her Foundation) Paul Thévenaz's pencil sketch of Florence Blumenthal (probably produced around 1920 at the same time as the murals) reflects their close, personal friendship.<sup>136</sup> (See Fig. 73) The Blumenthal's indoor pool and mural, as well as other parts of the house, continue attract attention in the press:

...[T]he Blumenthal home at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street...one of the city's great showplaces...had a shoe closet rivaling that of Imelda Marcos, a knockout

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<sup>134</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>135</sup> Paul Thévenaz, *Paul Thévenaz: a record of his life and art, together with an essay on style by the artist, and including 107 reproductions of his drawings, paintings & decorative work* (New York: Privately printed, 1922), pp. 16-17.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

indoor pool adorned by a marine mural and a 44-foot-high patio removed from the Spanish castle Vélez Blanco.”<sup>137</sup>

The Blumenthal mansion is the only recorded example on the Upper East Side during this period to feature an indoor swimming pool. It was common for collectors' estates in warmer climates of the United States to include an outdoor pool, such as Hearst Castle (1919) in San Simeon, California, Ca d'Zan (1925) in Sarasota, Florida, and The Breakers (1893) and Mar-A-Lago (1927), both in Palm Beach, Florida.<sup>138</sup> Perhaps a model of inspiration for the Blumenthal's murals was American modernist painter Robert Winthrop Chanler's decoration of the ceiling of the Swimming Pool grotto at Villa Vizcaya for industrialist James Deering 1916 in Miami, Florida. Like Thévenaz, Chanler drew inspiration from nature and undersea fantasy and included sea turtles, seahorses, octopi, alligators and fish, transforming the visitor into “a disciple of Poseidon.”<sup>139</sup> Chanler's work was featured at the influential 1913 Armory Show and also produced murals for a multitude of homes on Long Island, New York that the Blumenthals may have seen in person.<sup>140</sup>

The Blumenthals commissioned Rateau to produce the patio furniture and lighting for the indoor pool, the first designs under his own name and delivered in 1920, at the same time as the Venetian-style ballroom discussed early in this chapter.<sup>141</sup> Inspired by the aquatic theme of the painted mural decoration by Thévenaz, Rateau produced six bronze armchairs cast with scales and shells (model no. 1793), two patinated bronze tables with marble tops (model no. 1792), and a small alabaster lamp supported by bronze serpents,

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<sup>137</sup> Glueck, “Photography Review, Women Who Focused Lenses on Old New York.”

<sup>138</sup> Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, built between 1889-1896, contains a 70,000-gallon indoor pool in the basement.

<sup>139</sup> <http://vizcaya.org/house-robert-winthrop-chanler.asp>. For more information on Robert Winthrop Chanler, see Gina Wouters, Andrea Gollin eds., “Robert Winthrop Chanler: Discovering the Fantastic” (New York, NY: The Monacelli Press, 2016).

<sup>140</sup> See Milton Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988); Ivan Narodny, *The Art of Robert Winthrop Chanler* (New York: William Helburn, 1922).

<sup>141</sup> Duncan, pp. 52-57; notes from conversation with Julie Blum at Galerie Anne Sophie Duvalé, Paris, May 11, 2016.

made between 1919-1920.<sup>142</sup> (Fig. 74 illustrates one of the bronze chairs from the set) Rateau's bronze designs, a quintessential expression of the Art Deco movement, were regarded more as works of art than furniture, combining classic elements from the Antique through his interpretation of the *curule* form and choice of material, juxtaposed with a stark austerity, all innovative for the time.<sup>143</sup>

The journal of French artist and close friend of Florence Blumenthal, Paul Landowski, recorded that, in June 1925, George Blumenthal examined the ironwork furniture that Florence designed in collaboration with Rateau.<sup>144</sup> Although it is unclear if Landowski is referencing the ironwork chairs and table commissioned for the Blumenthal's pool patio in New York, made in Paris several years earlier before being shipped overseas, or else additional pieces of furniture that Rateau made for the Blumenthal's residence on the Boulevard de Montmorency in Paris, a close collaboration between Florence Blumenthal and Rateau indeed took place. Once again, Florence's role in not only decorating, but

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<sup>142</sup> Period photographs record two apparent variants of the 'Blumenthal' design - one with an extra row of 'fish' elements in the back, the other with a straight "X" back brace, as opposed to the bowed "X" brace in the Blumenthal examples. No trace of these variants has been found. Following the death of George Blumenthal in 1941, it is believed that the Rateau furniture passed down to a relative in Florida and was acquired by Smith Knudsen Inc., Interior Designs and Antiques, based in Florida, at an unknown date. Based on documentation found in the Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson, second wife of George Blumenthal, resided between New York and Palm Beach and may have inherited the suite of Rateau bronze furniture after George Blumenthal's death. See Archives of the Archdiocese of New York S/C 43, folder 4. In February 1973, George W. Headley III purchased four of the six chairs from Smith Knudsen and placed them in his *rocaille* grotto on the grounds of his farm in Lexington, Kentucky, today part of the Headley Whitney Museum.<sup>[SEP]</sup> The remaining two armchairs from the Blumenthals' original set of six were acquired by the DeLorenzo Gallery, New York in 1990. They were acquired by two different private collectors, one of which in 1991 by Robert Roberts, who later sold the chair at auction. It was re-acquired by DeLorenzo in 2007 and, as of December 2016, remains with them today. The seventh known example of the 'Model 1793' design previously belonged to Rateau's wife and was included in an ensemble of works by Rateau featured in the 1926 exhibition French Modern Decorative and Industrial Art held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. It was subsequently donated to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris by Madame Rateau. An eighth example of the armchair is visible in photographs of the bathroom belonging to the Duchess of Alba in Madrid. See "Important 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Decorative Arts," Christie's New York (June 15, 2004), lot 92; "DeLorenzo: Thirty Years, Evening Sale," Christie's New York (December 14, 2010), lot 24; and Colleen Weis, "Rateau, the Ornamentalist," *Christie's Magazine* (December 1998), p. 78.

<sup>143</sup> Excerpt from Martin Battersby, *The Decorative Twenties* (New York: Walker and Company, 1969) from object file (inv. no. 1986.6.1a-8), Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco.

<sup>144</sup> Paul Landowski, *Journal de Paul Landowski, Un Artiste Humaniste*, (entry on June 5, 1925).

designing, parts of the interior decoration of the Park Avenue home was extremely unusual for the period, reiterating Germain Seligman's earlier reference to an "extraordinary woman."<sup>145</sup> (See page 106) It was perhaps the Blumenthal's commission of this suite of Rateau furniture that set the couple apart from other contemporary collectors of the period and demonstrated their collecting and aesthetic interest in both antique and the modern Art Deco style of the period.

### Influences

At the time of the Blumenthal bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1941, director, Francis Henry Taylor, remarked that "[o]ne must look abroad to the Carrand collection in the Bargello in Florence or to the Jacquemart-André Museum in Paris to find a re-creation of the renaissance palazzo comparable to the Blumenthal residence at the corner of Park Avenue and Seventieth Street."<sup>146</sup> Other than the 1930 *Town & Country* and *International Studio* articles, discussed earlier, the Blumenthal mansion was not included in academic or professional journals, thus Taylor's impression of the Blumenthal's home and display is useful in evaluating how the collection was perceived by connoisseurs and art professionals at the time, as well as situating the couple in the context of other collectors.

The Blumenthals also embody similarities with other collectors, such as James Jackson Jarves (1818-1888), who collected to benefit various museums, notably the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and John G. Johnson (1841-1917) who, like George Blumenthal, was self-made and arranged for his collection to be on view to the public in his house in Philadelphia after his death, however the collection was ultimately deposited at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>147</sup> Based on the fact that Johnson visited the Blumenthal's Park Avenue house in 1917 and was particularly struck by collection and installation, we

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<sup>145</sup> Seligman, pp. 142-143.

<sup>146</sup> Timothy Wilson, *Maiolica: Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), p. 43.

<sup>147</sup> Constable, p. 39; 48.

can therefore assume that the collectors knew each other.<sup>148</sup> (Johnson's visit to the Blumenthal's house is discussed in more detail in Part 3) Like Johnson, the Blumenthals also expressed similar collecting patterns to Isabella Stewart Gardner and Henry Walters who travelled widely and employed advisers, agents, and dealers, however, were actively involved in their acquisitions, did not wait for objects to be brought to their attention, and relied on a personal connection to an object when considering an acquisition.<sup>149</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Blumenthals most closely emulated aspects of Gardner's courtyard at Fenway Court to showcase the integration of architectural elements and display Medieval and Renaissance works of art.

As discussed in Part 1, George Blumenthal may have also looked to J.P. Morgan as a model in both business and collecting. Like Blumenthal, Morgan was not a trained connoisseur and chose art because he was moved by its beauty.<sup>150</sup> He preferred the art of the past, particularly from the Renaissance era, because he felt at home with it and enjoyed the association with their previous owners.<sup>151</sup> While he may not have been intentionally collecting for the public good, Morgan's collection was ultimately "permanently available for the instruction and pleasure of the American people."<sup>152</sup> Morgan's taste for antique books and manuscripts, as well as Italian Renaissance ceramics, may have influenced George Blumenthal above all. (The Blumenthal's collection of ceramics will be discussed further in Part 3)

### Conclusion

This in-depth study of the Blumenthal's New York homes traced the evolution of the Blumenthal's increased wealth, status, and collection to commission their final home on Park Avenue that served as their principal seat. They relied on a close team of architects, designers, and dealers, notably Alavoine, Armand-Albert Rateau, and Jacques Seligmann,

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<sup>148</sup> The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Biblioteca Berenson, Villa I Tatti, Florence.

<sup>149</sup> Constable, p. 47.

<sup>150</sup> Aline B. Saarinen, *The Proud Possessors: The lives, times and tastes of some adventurous American art collectors* (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 76.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76; 91.

to furnish and decorate a permanent Manhattan residence for their growing art collection. Florence Blumenthal played an integral part in many of the individual features of the house that set the stage for its public philanthropic role that will be further discussed in Part 3. This chapter established a core group of influencers for the Blumenthals within the spectrum of American collectors, primarily Isabella Stewart Gardner, and an elite Jewish social circle. In contrast to their collecting activity and homes in America, the Blumenthal's French residences in Paris and Grasse will be discussed in Part 2B.

## Part 2B. Houses in France

### The Blumenthal's French Houses and Collections

This chapter will analyze George and Florence Blumenthal's residences in France, beginning with their early years in Paris, followed by the purchase and extension of their residence in the sixteenth district, as well as a chateau near Grasse. It will also discuss the process of land acquisition, interior commissions, collections, and their design and aesthetic decisions in order to establish their preferred group of dealers and designers (local as well as international) to better understand how the couple utilized both of these homes abroad, to identify their social circles in France, and to analyze the role of their collecting partnership and collaboration in Europe in comparison to their relationship in America. An attempt will also be made to analyze the dynamic between the European model of collecting, with references to select contemporary collectors in France, Austria, and Germany, in contrast to New York, in order to position the Blumenthals in an appropriate context of collecting and to consider the ways in which they lived in different cultures.

An evaluation of the Blumenthals' French homes and select surviving interiors, which have not yet been examined to date, will also demonstrate their collecting motivations, the distinctive qualities of the collection, including the juxtaposition of modern and antique decoration, and how the couple displayed their collection overseas with the same educational goal in mind. Due to the lack of interior documentation of the main house, I will focus on records related to the construction and use of the Blumenthal's *Salle Gothique*, or Gothic room, in Paris in order to argue that it was designed and constructed as a public space for meetings and concerts, as well as provided a means for Florence Blumenthal to create a philanthropic identity. I will also argue that Florence played a direct role in the majority of architectural and decorating decisions in France, an unusual occurrence for a woman during this period. Finally, I will argue that the dispersal of their collection of French eighteenth-century works of art at auction in 1932 in Paris was part of the Blumenthal's ultimate goal of using the collection as a form of public and social engagement.

### Paris, The Early Years

Before moving more permanently to France during the 1920's, George and Florence Blumenthal spent the years during World War I in Paris as a result of George's position at Lazard Frères, as well as periods of time at a hotel in Monte Carlo for safety.<sup>1</sup> In 1915, the couple relocated to an apartment located at 7, rue Euler (on the corner of avenue Marceau) in the eighth district with a view of the Triumphal Arch.<sup>2</sup> In a letter from February 15, 1915 to her family in San Francisco, Florence describes this new Parisian residence:

Our apartment is going to be lovely once it is fixed up-and very comfortable. All our rooms are light and have sunshine...Of course I did not even try to redecorate- I shall wait until the war is over, but the things I have been accumulating since years added to the things I am buying make a lovely ensemble...Mme. Doucet has been helping me arrange the apartment-she has quite good taste and has a lot of amusing things-the kind I like, simple and in good taste.<sup>3</sup>

It is apparent from this quote that Florence had already begun collecting prior to World War I, however her skill for arrangement and decorating was shaped and influenced by her time in Paris.

Prior to relocating to the residence on rue Euler, George and Florence Blumenthal stayed at the Hotel Ritz in the weeks leading up to the move. Florence expressed organization and coordination challenges during the transfer to the sixteenth district and was in contact with the Paris office of Maison Alavoine for extra assistance, but ultimately decided not to engage their services.<sup>4</sup> The Blumenthals' social circle in this new neighborhood nonetheless consisted of aristocrats, politicians, and contemporary artists, as before, dining with Lord Grimthorpe and Mr. Hoentschel.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> de Rougemont, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> Elise Stern Haas Papers, 1914-1955, Carton 2:41, BANC MSS 2010/604, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



Between the years 1919-1925, George and Florence Blumenthal acquired two houses in France, both in Florence's name, as they were spending increasing amounts of time in Europe during the latter years of their marriage.<sup>6</sup> Although there is no concrete evidence, it is possible that George Blumenthal preferred to list the properties in France in Florence's name for tax purposes while he was still employed by Lazard Frères. Demonstrating a similar personal dedication and involvement evidenced in their newly completed mansion on East 70<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City, where they carefully selected an undeveloped plot of land and assembled a team of architects and craftsmen to supervise and administer their vision of an Italian Renaissance palazzo complete with period architectural elements and furnishings, the commission of their two homes in France was similarly highly choreographed. However, rather than building from scratch like in New York, the Blumenthals carefully selected existing French properties that they extended, renovated, and enlarged, always with a specific aesthetic vision in mind.

In Paris, the Blumenthals purchased a property in the rural neighborhood of the Bois de Boulogne in the sixteenth district where they progressively accumulated adjacent plots of land, transforming an already sizeable property into an immense estate with vast gardens, new structural additions, a renovated main house, and an attached *Salle Gothique* (Gothic room) equipped with period architectural elements and furnishings. They also commissioned Armand-Albert Rateau to complete the interior decoration in the 'Moderne' style, an interesting contrast to a collection of eighteenth-century furnishings and Gothic surroundings nearby.<sup>7</sup> Since the Blumenthal's New York residence was nearly complete when they commissioned the newly independent decorator Rateau to decorate their basement level pool, he was thus able to showcase more of his work in their Paris home. (See Part 2A for more information on Rateau's work for the Blumenthal's New York residence)

The Blumenthals also acquired a property in the south of France near Grasse, known as

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<sup>6</sup> Archives de Paris V011 2250; Dépôt du Cahier des Charges du Lotissement et Etablissement de l'Origine de Propriété du Château de Malbosc, Vol 3439, no. 25, Transcription du 23 mai 1954.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'Art Deco,' referred to as the *style moderne* in France during its development in the 1910s and 1920s, was coined at the time of the 1925 Paris Exposition. Goss, p. 3.

the Château de Malbosc (the only extant, however heavily altered, former Blumenthal property), that they, like in Paris, renovated, enlarged, and landscaped, once again commissioning Rateau to complete the interior decoration.

### 21, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, Paris

Not long after the Park Avenue residence was complete, George and Florence Blumenthal were spending increasing amounts of time in Europe during the latter years of their marriage. When the Blumenthals decided to establish themselves in Paris in 1919, they briefly settled at the recently renovated townhouse at 21, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne (today Avenue Foch) belonging to Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild (1864-1934) in the sixteenth district, before purchasing a permanent home that same year.<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 75 illustrates Madame Ephrussi's ownership of the property) It is also possible that the Blumenthals were introduced to Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild through their close friend and dealer, Jacques Seligmann, upon their arrival in Paris.<sup>9</sup>

Upon their return to Paris shortly after World War I, the Blumenthals would have no doubt experienced a different city from what they had known during the war. France was now a place of celebration with new conventions, values, and freer decorum.<sup>10</sup> The sixteenth district consisted of a residential community made up of members of high society, prominent nineteenth-century villas located in exclusive gated communities surrounded by gardens, and large boulevards created during Baron Haussmann's

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<sup>8</sup> Beginning in January 1909, government-appointed architect Jean-Marcel Auburtin (1872-1926) submitted new drawings and petitioned for permission to obtain interior modifications for a residential building on behalf of Madame Ephrussi. Archives de Paris V011 353; Duveen Brothers Records MF 466, Box 353, Folder 8, Reel #208 "Papers Regarding Scouts, Dealers, Restorers, and Collectors, 1910-1965"; Loïc Métrope and Edmée Benoist de la Grandière, "La résidence du Parc de Montmorency et avant? Entre les deux guerres: une présence américaine, George et Florence Blumenthal" (Paris: Librairie, 34 rue du Docteur Blanche, 2002), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> The fact that Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild lent objects from her collection to Seligmann's exhibitions at his gallery in Paris, it is likely that the two established a close and trustworthy relationship. Pauline Prevost-Marcilhacy, *Les Rothschilds, Une Dynastie de Mécènes en France*, vol. II (Paris: musée du Louvre, 2016), p. 254.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *The Life of Misia Sert* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980), p. 215.

modernization and transformation of the city.<sup>11</sup> The construction of the nearby Bois de Boulogne public park was, at the time, a relatively recent addition to the neighborhood and the abundance of green space for recreation was also a new attraction.<sup>12</sup> Coming from the Upper East Side of Manhattan, the Blumenthals would have found this new neighborhood familiar, comfortable, and removed from the busy Parisian streets of the city centre. However, Paris had also been greatly affected by the war and many of the once modern features of the capital were now overshadowed by declining urban development, poor housing, and temporary discontinuation of major monuments and new boulevards initiated by Haussmann in the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, in contrast to post World War I America, Paris no doubt represented for affluent Americans a city of beauty, artistic talent, and freedom that attracted many foreign artists, musicians, and writers and intellectuals who formed a vibrant community in the City of Light.<sup>14</sup>

The Blumenthal's early connection to Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild upon their arrival in Paris, whether as close acquaintances or simply tenants, illustrates an association with an influential woman and collector in the upper echelon of Parisian society. The fact that Ephrussi purchased a pair of eighteenth-century Sèvres porcelain flower pots from the Blumenthal collection sale in 1932, just two years before her death that are still conserved at the Villa Ephrussi today, suggests that the collecting link between these two families may have been meaningful and enduring.<sup>15</sup> (More details about the Blumenthal sale will be discussed later in this chapter) Ephrussi's purchase of these porcelain objects

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<sup>11</sup> Alexandre Keller, "16e arrondissement-Quartier d'Auteuil," *Collection des éphémères*, 35 Act Bd de Montmorency, Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris.

<sup>12</sup> J. M. Chapman and Brian Chapman, *The Life and Times of Baron Haussmann: Paris in the Second Empire* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson), 1957:89.

<sup>13</sup> Colin Jones, *Paris, The Biography of a City* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 384.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>15</sup> See "Collection de M. George Blumenthal," 1932, Lot 63 described as: "*Deux petites jardinières en ancienne porcelain tendre de Sèvres. Elles affectent la forme de caissettes à quatre faces décorées d'attributs variés. Les angles et les grains d'amortissement sont décorés. Année 1766. Décor par Buteux (Charles).*" Beatrice Ephrussi likely hired Paris dealer Henri Stettiner to purchase the Sèvres jardinières and paid 4,800 francs, a substantial sum. Conversation with Guillaume Séret in Paris, February 25, 2016. For more information on Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild's porcelain collection, see Guillaume Séret, "Porcelain Françaises, 1933," in Pauline Prevost-Marcilhacy, *Les Rothschild, Une Dynastie de Mécènes en France*, vol. II (Paris: musée du Louvre, 2016), pp. 316-355.

may have also served as a way to memorialize the relationship with the Blumenthals and their collection.

Like Florence Blumenthal, Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild was fifteen years younger than her husband and could not bear children.<sup>16</sup> This may have drawn Florence's focus towards travel, collecting, and the commission of new building projects in Paris and the south of France. The sophisticated collecting tradition of Béatrice's Ephrussi perhaps also reinforced the influence of a European model of collecting for the Blumenthals. This model included access to the best artistic talent available, including architects, decorators, landscape gardeners, and artists, antique panelling and original architectural elements, eighteenth-century furnishings, and the creation of enchanting atmospheres.<sup>17</sup>

Although the extent to which the Blumenthals established a distinctive Jewish social circle is undocumented, the couple may also have been in contact with other members of the French branch of the Rothschild family who lived in the sixteenth district, including Edmond de Rothschild at 29, avenue du Bois de Boulogne, who lived just a few doors from Béatrice Ephrussi; Baron Eugène de Rothschild, whose *hôtel particulier* was located on nearby rue Michel-Ange; and Baron Henri James de Rothschild, who lived on the Boulevard de Montmorency, the street on which the Blumenthals would eventually settle.<sup>18</sup> The fact that Florence Blumenthal was acquainted with a number of members of the Rothschild family in New York, as discussed in Part 2A, suggests that this network may have also transferred to Paris.

### 15, Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris

On August 16, 1919, George and Florence Blumenthal acquired a large property at number 11-13 Boulevard de Montmorency (situated between the Boulevard de

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<sup>16</sup> Ulrich Leben, "Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild: creator and collector," p. 23 [https://www.rothschildarchive.org/materials/review\\_2008\\_2009\\_beatrice\\_ephrussi\\_1.pdf](https://www.rothschildarchive.org/materials/review_2008_2009_beatrice_ephrussi_1.pdf) (accessed February 10 2016).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Juliet Carey, "Edmond de Rothschild's Boxes," History of Collecting Seminars, The Wallace Collection, June 27, 2016; Topographie de la France, Paris 16 arr., Va313, Tome IV (H83104-H83186), BNF, Département des Estampes, Paris.

Montmorency and the rue du Docteur Blanche) in the neighborhood of Auteuil in the sixteenth district.<sup>19</sup> While there are no known surviving illustrations of the interior of the house, there are, however, several photographs of the exterior and gardens conserved in scrapbooks, topography albums of Paris, and architectural records.<sup>20</sup> (See Fig. 76a-d) The Neo-Greek-style chateau, most likely built in the late 1860s or early 1870s, incorporated an orangery and extensive gardens, measuring approximately 3,000 acres, formerly the hunting grounds of the Marshall of Montmorency-Luxembourg.<sup>21</sup> The property was purchased in Florence Blumenthal's name (again perhaps for tax purposes) for two million francs and paid in cash.<sup>22</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, with the arrival of foreign Jews in central Paris, the established Parisian Jewish bourgeoisie migrated from the more traditional neighborhoods of the third and fourth districts to the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and sixteenth.<sup>23</sup> Paris had now become the dominant centre of urban Jewish culture and the lifestyle of the emerging Jewish bourgeoisie was relatively indistinguishable from its Catholic counterpart. Bankers, like George Blumenthal, would not have had as much difficulty integrating into society circles as they would have had in New York.<sup>24</sup> The restricting and codifying society in New York during this period was likely due to the

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<sup>19</sup> The Boulevard de Montmorency, situated between the rue d'Assomption and the rue d'Auteuil, also referred to as the *Quartier d'Auteuil*, is a stretch of land measuring 960 meters with a row of planted trees opening on to the park, the opening of which was ordered in 1853 as a result of the new railroad. Classified as an official Paris street in 1863, the properties along the Boulevard were soon enclosed by a uniform iron gate and a three-meter plot of land reserved for a flower-beds. The chateau and adjacent park at 11-13 Boulevard de Montmorency, purchased by the Blumenthals, is recorded as the property of Durand Aymé in 1873. It is likely that the house was built in the late 1860s or early 1870s. Collection des éphémères, 35 Act Bd de Montmorency, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris; V011 757, Cadastre 1876, Archives de Paris.

<sup>20</sup> See G. & F. B. Scrapbook; Topographie de la France, Paris 16 arr., 61ème quartier, Boulevard Montmorency-Propriété Blumenthal (H83187-H83189), BNF, Département des Estampes, Paris.

<sup>21</sup> Commission du Vieux Paris, Casier archéologique, 16e-73; Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 12; André de Fouquières, *Mon Paris et Ses Parisiens, Vers le Point du Jour* (Paris: Editions Pierre Horay, 1959), p. 196.

<sup>22</sup> The Blumenthals purchased the property from Mr. and Mrs. Caucurte, Mr. and Mrs. Fantauzzi, and Mr. Meurgey. Notary M. Robert Revel, Act 10552.

<sup>23</sup> Esther Benbassa, *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 106.

<sup>24</sup> Jay R. Berkovitz, *The Shaping of a Jewish Identity in Nineteenth Century France* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), p. 113.

tension between old families, the influx of immigrants, and the multitude of new fortunes advertised through the display of wealth and consumption.

The village of Auteuil, to the west of Paris, historically consisted of noblemen's houses and vineyards built by monks between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries and was ultimately annexed by the city in 1859 during the Paris Commune under Napoleon III.<sup>25</sup> Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, Auteuil was popular among writers, artists, and society figures, including Molière, Racine, Hubert Robert, La Tour, Chateaubriand, Madame Récamier, Carpeaux, Victor Hugo, and the Goncourts Brothers who favored it for its quiet ambience and proximity to Paris.<sup>26</sup> By the time the Blumenthals purchased the property, the rural neighborhood surrounding the Boulevard de Montmorency was particularly picturesque with nine hundred sixty meters of planted trees bordering the Bois de Boulogne that had been opened in 1853 to establish the new railway line from Saint-Lazare.<sup>27</sup> The Boulevard was classified as a Paris road by decree in 1863 and the final numbering occurred in 1890. It was also a requirement that all of the properties bordering the park remain enclosed with a uniform iron gate, thus creating an environment of privacy and seclusion.<sup>28</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, residents on the Boulevard de Montmorency included a combination of Gentile aristocrats such as the comtesse de Kessler, vicomtesse Martel de Janville, and the comtesse Bernard du Breil, military figures such as General Jamont, artist Jacques-Émile Blanche, and novelist Marcel Proust, as well as prominent Jewish families, including playwright and philanthropist, Baron Henri James de Rothschild, the Blum family at number 79, and the Kauffmann family at number 81-85.<sup>29</sup> As a result of the Dreyfus Affair that prompted increased anti-Semitism in Paris during this period, there may have been some religious and political tension in such a mixed neighborhood.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://movingtoparis.org/auteuil/>; Jean-Yves Tadie, Excerpted from *Marcel Proust: A Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), pp. 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> Tadie, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Alexandre Keller, "16e arrondissement-Quartier d'Auteil," Collection des éphémères, 35 Act d Bd de Montmorency, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*; "Topographie de la France, XVI arrondissement," Va313, Tome IV, H83186, BNF, Département des Estampes; Tadie, p. 2; Notary M. Robert Revel, Act 26719.

Nonetheless, it is fitting that the Blumenthals selected such a historically artistic neighborhood for their Parisian home and Florence would continue the tradition of reuniting artists, musicians, and literary personalities by hosting salons in conjunction with her new *Fondation Américaine pour la Pensée et l'Art Français* (discussed in Part 1).

The sophistication of the Blumenthal's social circle can also be ascertained from records describing Florence Blumenthal's Foundation, for which she assembled different artistic juries and committees which included poet Paul Valéry, artists Paul Signance, Aristide Maillol, Paul Landowski, Edouard Vuillard, and Jean Dunand, and author Anna de Noailles, among others.<sup>30</sup> Correspondence between George Blumenthal and Paul Valéry, in which Blumenthal invites Valéry, the Countess Gabriel de la Rochefocauld, the Countess Ernest d'Arenberg, and Princess Philippe de Chimay, further illustrates the elite circle of artists and French aristocrats the Blumenthals surrounded themselves with in Paris.<sup>31</sup> The Blumenthals' social activities, charitable donations, and travel activity between France and the United States were also frequently publicized in the Parisian newspaper, *Le Gaulois*, revealing they attended the weddings of French aristocrats, the premier of the *ballets russes*, and concerts at the home of singers and composers.<sup>32</sup>

The Blumenthals' elite, European circle is furthermore revealed in the memoirs of French nobleman and tastemaker, Paul Ernest Boniface de Castellane, marquis de Castellane, known as *Boni*, that included George and Florence Blumenthal among those privileged guests invited to one of his dinner parties:

...I wanted to see if I still had the power to excite the worldly people, and the talent to put together beautiful receptions. I invited the Ambassador of Austria and the Countess Seczen to dinner at the restaurant Pré-Catalan, in a private dining room. My sister-in-law, Countess Jean de Castellane, was at the table. I

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<sup>30</sup> Michele Siegel, "Florence Meyer Blumenthal, 1875-1930, *Jewish Women's Archive* (accessed July 9, 2016): <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/blumenthal-florence-meyer>

<sup>31</sup> NAF19166 microfilm 2679, pp. 114-128, Département des Manuscrits, Bibliothèque National de France.

<sup>32</sup> For the Blumenthal's social activity, see the following issues of *Le Gaulois*: May 16, 1913; June 27, 1921; April 7, 1925; May 3, 1928; June 2, 1928; and October 3, 1928. For their charitable donations in *Le Gaulois*, see: November 14, 1912; November 6, 1918; January 18, 1924; December 25, 1924; and June 24, 1927.

also invited Count and Countess Jean de Montebello, Countess Charles d'Harcourt; the Marquis and Marquise de Pracomtal, Mr. and Mrs. Georges Blumenthal, Count and Countess de Chabrillan, the Ministers of Persia, Greece, Argentina and other less prominent personalities.<sup>33</sup>

Over the course of eight successive transactions, the Blumenthals eventually acquired several additional parcels of adjacent land, both by exchange or additional purchase, slowly buying up the façade of the Boulevard, to arrive at the home address known as 15, Boulevard de Montmorency which ultimately totaled over 25,000 square meters (approximately 6,000 acres).<sup>34</sup>

Not long after the Blumenthal's acquisition of the property, art dealer, Joseph Duveen, wrote to Florence Blumenthal interested to know about her new house in the Bois de Boulogne and commented on how much Florence will be in her element in "doing it up," recognizing her sophisticated taste and prominent social surroundings.<sup>35</sup> This may have

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<sup>33</sup> "...je voulus me rendre compte si j'avais encore le pouvoir de remuer les gens du monde, et le talent de mettre en scène de belles réceptions. J'invitai à dîner l'ambassadeur d'Autriche et la comtesse Seczen au restaurant Pré-Catalan, dans une salle à manger privée...Ma belle soeur, la comtesse Jean de Castellane, présida la table. Je conviai également le comte et la comtesse Jean de Montebello, la comtesse Charles d'Harcourt; le marquis et la marquise de Pracomtal, M. et Mme Georges Blumenthal, le comte et la comtesse de Chabrillan, les ministres de Perse, de Grèce, d'Argentine et différentes personnalités moins marquantes." Boni de Castellane, *Mémoires, 1867-1932* (Parris: Perrin, 1986), p. 440. The Blumenthals likely met Boni de Castellane before the couple's acquisition of the property on the Boulevard de Montmorency in Paris as they acquired a suite of French furniture from the marquis for their West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street residence in New York before 1917. "French & Company records, 1910-1998 (bulk 1950-1960)," Box 3, folder 3. George and Florence Blumenthal were also friendly with Boni's brother and sister-in-law, Count Stanislas and Countess Nathalie de Castellane and George Blumenthal bequeathed the Count \$25,000 in his Will in 1941.

"Last Will and Testament of George Blumenthal," January 9, 1941, George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>34</sup> Commission du Vieux Paris, Casier archéologique, 16e-73; Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 13. The principal portion of the property at 11-13 Boulevard de Montmorency, measuring 11,000 square meters, was acquired from Madame Caucurte, Madame Fantauzzi de Caraccioli, and Jacques Meurgey de Tupigny. Coincidentally, banker Michel Lazard, a colleague of George Blumenthal, sold 36, rue du Docteur Blanche to the Blumenthals on July 13, 1922. Commission du Vieux Paris, Casier archéologique, 16e-73.

<sup>35</sup> Duveen Brothers Records MF 466, Box 353, Folder 8, Reel #208 "Papers Regarding Scouts, Dealers, Restorers, and Collectors, 1910-1965." In the same letter of August 1919, Duveen also mentions to Florence Blumenthal that he at one time tried to purchase a house near the Bois de Boulogne from the picture dealer Trotti for a tempting price, but was unsuccessful, again illustrating a strong demand to live in the sixteenth district.



also been the dealer's attempt to attract new business.

By December 1919, the Blumenthals commissioned chief civil architects Richard-Herman-Antoine Bouwens van der Boijen (1863-1939) and Maurice-Jacques Boutterin (1882-1970) to construct a three-story concierge pavilion on the property; by January 1922, to plan and develop an annex featuring a *Salle Gothique* (Gothic room) made from period architectural fragments on the interior of the property (more on the Gothic room later in this chapter); and by November 1925, to construct a one-story building on the property and enlarge the communal pavilion at 11, Boulevard de Montmorency that the Blumenthals shared with a neighbor.<sup>36</sup> It is possible that Bouwens van der Boijen was introduced to George Blumenthal by Alexandre Lazard (1823-1904), co-founder of Lazard Frères, whose daughter, Marthe Lazard (1872-1964), was married to the architect.<sup>37</sup> Boutterin was also perhaps an attractive candidate to assist with the Blumenthal's expansion projects due to his proximity at the nearby property of 22, Boulevard de Montmorency.<sup>38</sup>

Architectural plans for the concierge pavilion indicate that it was positioned on the northeast side of the property along Boulevard de Montmorency and included a basement for mechanics, entry level, and first floor.<sup>39</sup> (See Figs. 77a-b) The entry level featured a kitchen, dining room and changing room and the first floor featured two bedrooms, bathroom, water closet, laundry, and storage room.<sup>40</sup> The exterior architecture of the

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<sup>36</sup> An application for permission to build a concierge pavilion, with elevations, was submitted to the Préfecture du Département de la Seine by Richard Bouwens van der Boijen on behalf of Florence Blumenthal on December 20, 1919. The initial authorization was refused on January 5, 1920, but eventually granted on January 24, 1920. A second application for permission to build a two-story "Salle de spectacle," or "Salle de Concerts," including elevations, was submitted on January 24, 1922 and approved on February 3, 1922. A third, and final, application with elevations for permission to enlarge a communal building between the Blumenthals and their neighbor Madame la Marquise de Brion, as well as build a one-story building with garage and guest rooms on the property, was submitted on November 14, 1925. Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, BOUTT/D/20/3; 272 AA1/14; Archives de Paris VO13 197; V011 2250; Notary M. Robert Revel, Act 46954.

<sup>37</sup> de Rougement, p. 267.

<sup>38</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Archives de Paris VO13 197.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

pavilion was classical in style with windows, archways and a pediment over the doorway. These architectural plans are conserved in the Archives de Paris, a repository for all permits beginning in the nineteenth century, and serve as important resources to more clearly understand the Blumenthal's direct involvement with the enlargement and design of the auxiliary buildings on the property.<sup>41</sup>

Florence's brother-in-law, Sigmund Stern, wrote of George and Florence's Paris home in 1921:

The Blumenthals expect to be in their new Paris home by August-I'll wager it is a gem-leave it to her-and to George to pay for it. Both experts in their respective lines.<sup>42</sup>

Stern's comment infers (similar to Eugene Meyer Jr.'s comment in Part 1) that Florence was the true arbiter of taste and George was merely the financier. In 1923, Sigmund Stern visited the Blumenthal's new Parisian home, once again signaling Florence Blumenthal's taste and influence in its conception:

We lunched with Florie and George in their new home yesterday set in a four acre park, all I can say is that it's a jewel and her individuality is everywhere in evidence.<sup>43</sup>

It was also Florence Blumenthal's concept to erect a *Salle Gothique* (hereinafter referred to as the Gothic room) adjoining the main house, the architectural plans for which were approved for construction in February 1922.<sup>44</sup> Figure 78 illustrates a letter from the

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<sup>41</sup> In addition to acquiring several additional parcels of land to enlarge their property on the Boulevard, George and Florence Blumenthal sold an adjacent plot of land measuring 1,564 square meters at 36, rue du Docteur Blanche to Michel Lazard, George Blumenthal's colleague and partner of the Paris branch of Lazard Frères, on July 10, 1922 for three hundred twenty thousand francs which was paid in cash. Notary M. Robert Revel, Act 26719. A certificate in the notary records signed by lawyer Charles G. Loeb, dated July 18, 1922, attested that George and Florence Blumenthal did not have a contract at the time of their marriage in 1898 in New York. Because French law requires a state of matrimonial affairs for inheritance purposes, this document was likely drawn up during this property sale.

<sup>42</sup> Narell, p. 361.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Multiple records and architectural blueprints related to the *Salle Gothique* acknowledge Florence Blumenthal as the client and owner of the Boulevard de Montmorency property and credit her with the proposition to construct the Gothic room. George Blumenthal's name is only listed as the client and owner of the property on documentation from 1925, the year of his

Blumenthal's architects, Bouwens de Boijen and Boutterin, requesting permission from the Prefect to construct a *Salle de Concert* (concert hall) on the property, identifying Florence Blumenthal as the owner of the property and the originator of the concept for the Gothic room.<sup>45</sup>

The idea for a Gothic room likely occurred shortly after the Blumenthal's purchase of the Paris house as they began acquiring medieval French architectural fragments as early as March 1920.<sup>46</sup> The Blumenthals had already demonstrated their interest in collecting antique architectural elements in New York, however the couple may have decided to continue collecting as the market for these artifacts remained active during this period and medieval art was particularly accessible for study in Paris following a pinnacle of interest in medieval history, literature, and art at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>47</sup>

Some sources claim that George and Florence Blumenthal selected the gothic style for their new addition in accordance with their collection of medieval and Renaissance paintings, sculpture, and furniture, however dealers were acutely aware that wealthy Americans were looking to acquire historic objects for their growing art collections.<sup>48</sup>

The Gothic room, above all, served as a vehicle for the Blumenthals to demonstrate their interest and continuous intention for public engagement, rather than a private display. It was a space that personified Florence Blumenthal, in particular, through her direct involvement with its design and architectural assemblage, and functioned as a salon space for social gatherings, musical concerts, and committee meetings for her Foundation.

Following Florence's death, elements of the Gothic room were ultimately donated by

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retirement from Lazard Frères, and concerned permission to enlarge the communal pavilion and built a one-story building on the property. Archives de Paris VO11, VO13 197.

<sup>45</sup> The *Salle Gothique* is also referred to as a *salle de spectacle* (theatre), *salle de concert* (concert hall), and *salle de musique* (music room), however the architectural elevations identify it as the *Salle Gothique*. Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 15; "Notice sur les Fragments de Monuments Anciens Ayant Servi à Construire la Salle de Musique de l'Hôtel du 15 Boulevard de Montmorency à Paris" (Paris: Les Editions Albert Lévy, 1930).

<sup>46</sup> Archives de Paris VO11, VO13 197.

<sup>47</sup> Christine E. Brennan, "Hoentschel's Gothic Importance," in Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide, Deborah L. Krohn, and Ulrich Leben, eds., *Salvaging the Past: Georges Hoentschel and French Decorative Arts from The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Bard Graduate Center: Decorative Arts, Design History, Material Culture), pp. 145, 147.

<sup>48</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 15.

George Blumenthal to the Metropolitan Museum in 1933 for incorporation into the Cloisters Museum. (See Part 3 for more information)

The three-story building (measuring 59 feet long, 24 feet wide, and 34 feet tall) was located on the south side of the main house and included a second lower level for mechanics and storage for wine and gardening tools, a lower level including a kitchen for entertaining and events which Florence frequently hosted, and the ground floor featuring the main reception room.<sup>49</sup> Figure 79a-c illustrates architectural elevations of the façade and cross sections of the interior of the Gothic room.

George and Florence Blumenthal remained at 21, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne during the construction of the Gothic room.<sup>50</sup> The Blumenthals hired Paris-based architect, decorator, dealer, and collector of Gothic objects and sculpture, Louis Cornillon, to assist with this ambitious project and he was instrumental in locating and purchasing period portals, doorways, and mantelpieces from French monuments for incorporation.<sup>51</sup> In 1922, due to financial necessity, Cornillon sold his collection of artwork and it is likely that the Blumenthals purchased architectural elements and sculpture directly from Cornillon to add to the decoration of their Gothic room.<sup>52</sup> Another principal client of Cornillon was philanthropist and collector Kate Sturges Buckingham (1858-1937) of Chicago who he was likely introduced to by Florence Blumenthal, a close friend of Buckingham.<sup>53</sup> Buckingham was greatly inspired by the Blumenthal's collection of medieval art and partially modeled her own Gothic Room, which she donated and installed for public display at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1924, on the Blumenthal's Gothic room in Paris. (See more about Buckingham's Gothic room later in this chapter)

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<sup>49</sup> Archives de Paris VO11, VO13 197; Casavant Frères, Paris, France—La Maison Blumenthal, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> In a letter from the Director of Beaux-Arts at the Commission des Monuments Historiques to Florence Blumenthal dated September 4, 1920, it is addressed 21, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

<sup>51</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 15; Buckingham Gothic room, folder 5-001-2-13, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>52</sup> Buckingham Gothic room, folder 5-001-2-13, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>53</sup> Christina M. Nielsen, "‘To Step into Another World’": Building a Medieval Collection at The Art Institute of Chicago," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, vol. 30, No. 2, Devotion and Splendor: Medieval Art at the Art Institute of Chicago (2004), p. 12.

Thanks to Florence, Cornillon was able to disseminate his collection to new collectors in America and assist with designing and constructing a second Gothic interior. According to Cornillon's records, he purchased fifteen architectural elements for the Blumenthal's Gothic room, including doors, windows, cloisters, and stained glass between 1919-1922 and served as the vendor of five objects, including wooden doors and columns.<sup>54</sup> Cornillon's account books also reveal that he arranged for the demolition, transportation, and surveillance of these elements to Paris.<sup>55</sup> The three architects, Bouwens van der Boijen, Bouterin, and Cornillon, together utilized their resources, relationships, and knowledge of important historic landmarks in order to obtain elements for the Blumenthal's Gothic room.<sup>56</sup>

The construction of the Gothic room in the early 1920s, including Cornillon's acquisition of architectural salvage on behalf of the Blumenthals, occurred during a period of political debate between prefects, ministers, and inspectors who supported the imperative classification of overlooked architectural elements.<sup>57</sup> The first passing of the Act in France, known as the "Law with Regard to Historic Monuments," on December 31, 1913 identified the protection of property on account of their historical, artistic or archaeological interest. As a result, French law hence provided two levels of protection: classification as historical monuments (essentially immovable cultural property banned from export); and listing in a supplementary inventory.<sup>58</sup> Although policies were advanced during the early decades of the twentieth century, the concept and designation of the Historic Monument traces its roots to the French Revolution when the government appointed Alexandre Lenoir to identify and safeguard important cultural buildings from

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<sup>54</sup> "Compte G. Blumenthal," George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives. Cornillon's account book for the Blumenthal's *Salle Gothique* was deposited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art by George Blumenthal on March 5, 1936.

<sup>55</sup> "Compte G. Blumenthal," George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

<sup>58</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/pdf/france\\_2010natrep\\_HC-P1\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/pdf/france_2010natrep_HC-P1_en.pdf) (accessed on December 3, 2015).

destruction or removal.<sup>59</sup>

The government agency, Historic Monuments Commission (*Commission des Monuments Historiques*, CMH) was created in Paris in 1837 to distribute funds and supervise the restoration of buildings with particular national importance.<sup>60</sup> Through a procedure, known as classification (*classement*), the Commission could select buildings (regardless of whether they were owned by the state, public corporations, or private individuals) based on the Inspector's reports and a network of local informants.<sup>61</sup> Before the foundation of the CMH, local societies contributed to the allocation of funds for the restoration of monuments and they continued to look after non-listed buildings on their own following the foundation of the Commission.<sup>62</sup> In 1851, the Commission organized a photographic survey, known as the *Missions Héliographiques*, to document France's medieval architecture and determine the nature and urgency of the preservation and restoration of work required at historic sites throughout France.<sup>63</sup> In the early twentieth century, approximately twenty-five buildings were classified annually in an effort to protect these architectural elements from the increased demand of the art market.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, the Blumenthals were able to successfully purchase a classified fifteenth-century double door from the hôtel Coeffiers d'Effiat in Gannat (Allier) to incorporate into their Gothic room. (See Figs. 35 and 85, more information on the history of the door later in this chapter)

Thanks to surviving exterior and interior photographs of the Gothic room, as well as architectural plans, it is possible to reconstruct the interior in order to provide a clearer understanding of the Blumenthal's concept and fabrication. Figure 80 illustrates an overall exterior view from the rear of the house displaying the newly assembled Gothic room and the connecting pathway still under construction. The principal door to the

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<sup>59</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monument\\_historique](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monument_historique).

<sup>60</sup> Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage, Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789-1914* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 49-50.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 49-51.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 76.

<sup>63</sup> [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/heli/hd\\_heli.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/heli/hd_heli.htm) (accessed on December 2, 2015).

<sup>64</sup> Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation, Antiquity to Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 285.

Gothic room once decorated the church of Reugny in Allier (in ruins today) and dates to the third quarter of the twelfth century.<sup>65</sup> (See Fig. 81) A double molded broken arch above provided shelter and was divided into four lobes enriched with flowers and surrounded by a pair of columns with capitals decorated with stylized leaves, originally surmounted by statues (reminiscent of those that decorated the royal portal at Chartres), chimeras, and leaves. The interior arch of the doorway rested on two monolithic columns with capitals also decorated with leaves.<sup>66</sup>

To the right of the door was a gallery of broken arcades decorated with trefoils along the interior and resting on floating bases.<sup>67</sup> (See Fig. 82) This covered gallery, originally part of the cloister from the Froville priory, connected the main house to the Gothic room.<sup>68</sup> At the other end of the gallery (not visible) was a double-sided rectangular door, the front panel acquired in Fontainebleau and originally from a house in Poitiers, elaborately decorated with a torus surmounted by a finial and cabbage.<sup>69</sup> On the reverse of this door was a late fifteenth-century stone doorway elaborately decorated and topped by an arch and two steeples.<sup>70</sup>

The interior of the Gothic room was rectangular in shape, made up of two bays with cross-ribbed vaulting on a bar-long plan with a five-sided apse, covered with six-ribbed vaults radiating from the central key.<sup>71</sup> (See Fig. 83) A vast window sat above the principal door with an additional five windows on the right side of the building and two along the apse. The last section contained the organ (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) that dominated the room.<sup>72</sup> A covered gallery led to a door with a small window that opened onto the main reception room. Lastly, on one of the sides of the apse to the

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<sup>65</sup> “Notice sur les Fragments de Monuments Anciens Ayant Servi à Construire la Salle de Musique de l’Hôtel du 15 Boulevard de Montmorency à Paris” (Paris: Les Editions Albert Lévy, 1930), p. 8. This document contains annotations regarding architectural objects incorporated into the Cloisters, most likely conducted under the direction of Joseph Breck, before 1933.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

right was a pierced door and balcony overlooking the garden. A large chimney occupied the central bay on the left.

The room was constructed in a grey stone recycled from the abandoned fifteenth-century church of La Ville-l'Évêque (built in the late fifteenth century and consecrated in July 1519), near Berchères-sur-Vesgre (Eure-et-Loire).<sup>73</sup> The five windows that lit the nave, three on the right and two on the left, previously decorated the Jacobin convent in Sens in Burgundy (completed in 1365).<sup>74</sup> The large bay window embellished with glass panels in the shape of clovers, arches, and lozenges dated to the fourteenth century and originated from the neo-Gothic church of Saint-Benoît in Aizenay (built in 1904-1905) that incorporated older architectural elements.<sup>75</sup> The central window of the apse dated to the fifteenth century and was acquired in Saint-Brieux in northern France.<sup>76</sup>

The monumental, fifteenth-century chimney to the left wall of the central bay, was decorated with an escutcheon featuring a high-ranking crest supported by two angels from the Manzi collection.<sup>77</sup> (See Fig. 84) The arms and chevron featured three towers belonging to a group of families, including d'Armonville, Bauzitat de Selines, Brion de la Tour, Cellard du Sordet, and Grossin de Bauville.<sup>78</sup> The sides of the chimney were encrusted with decorative enameled squares perhaps from the Abbey of Saint-Seine or the abbatial castle of Lamargelle near Saint-Seine. In the center, a circular-shaped shield

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*; <http://www.biusante.parisdescartes.fr/sfhad/1995/1995-02.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> Notice, p. 8; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aizenay>.

<sup>76</sup> Notice, p. 8. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, stained glass was a central component to serious collectors of medieval art. As in the case of the Blumenthal's *Salle Gothique*, the religious imagery of stained glass often inspired its acquisition for installation in private chapels. Another important American collector of medieval art and stained glass, Raymond Pitcairn (1885-1966), began purchasing Medieval sculpture and stained glass in 1921 and transformed his former Pennsylvania home, Glencairn, to showcase his collection of religious work. Like the Blumenthals, Pitcairn commissioned an adjacent cathedral in the Gothic Revival style, known as the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, between 1913-1919. For more information on American collectors of Medieval stained glass, see Elizabeth Bradford Smith, "All my stained glass which I brought from Europe: William Poyntell and the Sainte-Chapelle medallions," *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2015), pp. 323-334.

<sup>77</sup> The chimney had been previously restored by various Parisian dealers, primarily the balustrade. "Notice," p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



showcased the arms of Pierre II de Fontette, abbot of Saint-Seine from 1439-1484, and the abbey's cross. Around the shield was a circle with the word *Moderate* written twice in gothic letters.<sup>79</sup>

A double pierced fifteenth-century door from the hôtel Coeffiers d'Effiat in Gannat (Allier), purchased by George Blumenthal in March 1920 through Cornillon, was positioned to the right of the central window incorporating a balcony with a view of the garden. The interior side of the door was pierced with a trefoil and decorated with two flowers in bloom bordering the dental work interrupted by trilobe arches. Above the door was an arch topped with a large finial and curly cabbage leaves and two large steeples. A sculpted, seven-pointed star in relief was positioned in the spandrel of the arch. The exterior decoration of the door featured flamboyant fenestration and a large arch surmounted by a finial framed by two angels holding a crest from the Gimont abbey in le Gers.<sup>80</sup>

The surviving exterior and interior photographs of the Gothic room provide an overall visualization of the space as a whole and the relationship between the assembled elements that imply different functions. The exterior design of the building, with its ogival windows and vaulted ceiling, as seen in Figure 76, resembles a chapel, abbey, or cloister adjoining the chateau. Inside, the furniture and works of art suggest a domestic ambiance, while the integration of the organ, imposing chimney, and Renaissance doors implicate a public space.

Louis Cornillon acquired the door from Gannat in 1920, despite significant attempts by historians and archeologists to prevent its removal from its place of origin and classify it as a Historic Monument.<sup>81</sup> In a letter to the Director of Beaux-Arts at the *Commission*

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>81</sup> During a meeting held on June 25, 1920, the Historic Monuments Commission issued a notice that it intended to pursue the classification of the door from the Hôtel Coeffiers d'Effiat and supported its return to its place of origin. Following a report confirming that the door was no longer located at the Hôtel Coeffiers d'Effiat property, but instead at Madame Blumenthal's residence in Paris, the commission waived the request for the return of the door and decided that

*des Monuments Historiques* on July 6, 1920, Cornillon described the new plan for the placement of the door and the importance of the Blumenthal's Gothic room, while supporting their preservation and construction efforts:

This door ... belongs to Madame Georges [sic] BLUMENTHAL- for whom I am only the agent-and for whom I am building a gothic room at 13 Boulevard [sic] Montmorency which will be I think an ornament of Paris. This door, better preserved than at Gannat, must be placed inside the room, can remain listed there, and will never leave France.<sup>82</sup>

Cornillon's letter in support of George and Florence Blumenthal's plan to construct a Gothic room, while preserving the classified door, provides a framework for the state's concern for preservation, as well as his admiration of the couple's patronage and taste. However, it was also in Cornillon's own interest to support the project as the commissioned architect. Although Cornillon wrote many letters on the Blumenthal's behalf regarding different aspects of the execution of the Gothic room, it is likely that this practice was not typical.

Even Florence Blumenthal herself wrote to the Director that same month to describe her intentions for the door and her vision for the Gothic room in order to persuade the commission to allow her to keep it, despite its recent listing as a Historic Monument:

...As owner of the said door, I hasten to let you know my answer. To my great regret, it is absolutely impossible for me to accept the decision of the Historic Monuments Commission since I have no authority to return this door to its place of origin which I do not own and which, moreover, is not at all in a good enough state to receive this door. I am currently building a house at 13 Boulevard de Montmorency in Paris, and am adjoining a room entirely in the gothic style to the

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it would instead be classified as a sort of "*objet mobilier*" where the owner was free to place the door where he saw fit.

[http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr/monumentshistoriques/Annees/index\\_merimee\\_NR.html](http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr/monumentshistoriques/Annees/index_merimee_NR.html) (accessed November 1, 2015). Madame Blumenthal was described as an Alsatian who was decorated with the Legion of Honor and who had reconstructed a French village on her property. Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

<sup>82</sup> "*Cette porte...appartient a Madame Georges [sic] BLUMENTHAL-dont je ne suis que le mandataire-et pour laquelle je construis 13 Boulevard [sic] Montmorency une salle gothique qui sera je crois un ornement de Paris. Cette porte, mieux conservée qu'à Gannat, devait être placée à l'intérieur de la salle, pouvait y figure classée, et ne partira jamais de France.*" Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

main house. I intend to place the door there paying homage to the work, and I would be happy [sic] to have it there, classified as a historical monument...<sup>83</sup>

Florence's letter persuaded the Commission to allow her to retain the door and feature it in her proposed installation on the condition that it remained classified as a Historic Monument and its re-edification was supervised by a chief architect appointed by the organization. Florence also agreed to finance all associated expenses.<sup>84</sup> The door was officially listed by the Minister of Education and Fine Arts on July 22, 1920.<sup>85</sup>

It is understandable that much effort and correspondence ensued about the door's classification as the aesthetic qualities of this doorway were described in 1920 by a delegate of the Société bourbonnais des Etudes locales following its removal from the town of Gannat:<sup>86</sup>

Of the purest ogival style of the fifteenth century, the richness of its forms, the purity of its lines, distinguish it already from all of the archaeological specimens of the same nature from this period.<sup>87</sup>

The notion of a "pure ogival style" door with a pointed Gothic arch and purity of lines recapitulates the contemporary American psyche towards the Gothic revival style by

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<sup>83</sup> "Comme propriétaire de la dite porte, je m'empresse de vous faire connaître ma réponse. A mon grand regret, il m'est absolument impossible d'accepter la décision de la Commission des Monuments Historiques car je n'ai aucune autorité pour remettre cette porte au lieu d'origine qui ne m'appartient pas et qui d'ailleurs n'est pas du tout en état de recevoir cette porte. Je suis en train de faire construire une maison 13 Boulevard de Montmorency à Paris, et je fais adjoindre à la maison principale une salle constituée entièrement en style gothique. J'ai l'intention d'y placer la porte d'une façon digne de l'oeuvre, et je serais heureux [sic] de l'avoir là, classée comme monument historique." Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

<sup>84</sup> Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

<sup>85</sup> Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

<sup>86</sup> The door was removed before April 21, 1920 by the widow Madame Moity and then passed to Monsieur Fleury Francisque, entrepreneur of masonry works in Gannat. Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

<sup>86</sup> "Notice," p. 13

<sup>87</sup> "Du plus pur style ogival du XVe siècle, la richesse de ses forms, la pureté de ses lignes, la faisaient déjà distinguer entre tous les spécimens archéologiques de même nature de cette époque." Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale.

1920 in France.<sup>88</sup> American collectors' interest in Gothic and Medieval art was a result of a few parallel factors, notably of that of the contemporary Arts and Crafts Movement in America, led by John Ruskin in England, that promoted the life-enhancing qualities of medieval craftsmanship. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, there was also a desire among wealthy American collectors to collect European art with aristocratic provenances in an effort to associate with European nobility.<sup>89</sup> As a result of more Americans traveling to Europe between 1900-1920, an increased number of important American collections of Medieval art were being formed, resulting in the donation and installation of portals and cloisters in many American museums. All of these factors contributed to the influence of Gothic Revival taste in America that directly impacted public and private collecting.<sup>90</sup> (Additional information on collecting medieval art in the Gilded Age will be discussed later in this chapter)

In addition to an American interest in Gothic art, there was also a Gothic revival tradition in France. In *Rediscoveries in Art*, Francis Haskell suggests that the re-emergence of a style is part of the general evolution within art, where artists, styles and movements regularly appear or are re-discovered.<sup>91</sup> He also suggests that stylistic revivals were often associated with political, social and religious implications, as well as a change in a collector's taste and the possibility of nostalgia for the past.<sup>92</sup>

The exterior silhouette on the garden side of the Gothic room was perhaps the most attractive with a doorway and small balcony framed by greenery, a high window, and covered tower with conical roof. (See Fig. 86) The tower and tiled roof originated from a

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<sup>88</sup> The research on the Gothic revival is well recorded. The notion of a *pure* gothic style was frequently discussed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most notably by the famous Gothic revivalist architect, Augustus Pugin (1812-1852), who believed that "the true Gothic style was not an option, but an historical, moral, and religious necessity." (Lucie Armitt, *Twentieth-Century Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Brennan, p. 149.

<sup>90</sup> Notes from Dr. Elizabeth Bradford Smith's paper, "Medieval Art in America: Patterns of Collecting 1800-1940."

<sup>91</sup> Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion, and Collecting in England and France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 62; Claire Charlotte Louise Fleming, "Rediscovering the art of the Ancien Régime, The recognition of a nineteenth-century collector in the re-emergence of a style," (Masters thesis, University of Leiden, 2017), p. 2.

sixteenth-century manor in Vernet belonging to the La Châtre, then Le Borgne family.<sup>93</sup> Abandoned during the Revolution, it remained a ruin during the nineteenth century. Its large rectangular windows and flamboyant skylight and mullions, high roof, large turret with stairs, and profile of moldings were built during the late fifteenth century, a departure from the early Renaissance style.<sup>94</sup> The tower enclosed a staircase and the mechanism for the organ at the top. The lower register included a door surmounted by a fragment of the Crown of the Virgin from the thirteenth century.<sup>95</sup> The impression of the chapel as a whole is serene and well integrated into the landscape, successfully evoking that the building is original to the grounds and a coherent assembly of all of the parts.

Due to the various complexities involved in the planning and construction of the Gothic room, Florence Blumenthal played an active role in surveying the entire project and requiring that every detail was submitted in advance, unafraid to refuse any of the proposed designs.<sup>96</sup> Her direct involvement with the planning of the room is reminiscent of Isabella Stewart Gardner's daily presence and personal charge of logistics during the purchasing of the architectural fragments and construction of Fenway Court in Boston.<sup>97</sup> As Aline B. Saarinen recounts:

Fenway Court, down to its last detail, was complete in her head from the start...Mrs. Gardner went around Europe collecting architectural fragments, from columns to staircases, with absolute certainty of where each would go. Mrs. Gardner was on the job daily, bringing her lunch like the workmen...She took personal charge of logistics...Nothing could be removed from the warehouse or carried on the job without her direct command. Work was held up for two weeks while she decided on stones for a door; floor timbers could not be laid until she returned from a trip to indicate where each column belonged in the colonnade."<sup>98</sup>

In accordance with the notion that Gothic rooms were appropriate places for concerts and

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<sup>93</sup> "Notice," p. 15.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 20.

<sup>97</sup> Aline B. Saarinen, *The Proud Possessors: The lives, times and tastes of some adventurous American art collectors* (New York: Random House, 1958), pp. 48-49.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

meditation, void of religious associations, Florence commissioned a large organ for the reception room of the Gothic room.<sup>99</sup> Trained organist and member of the music jury of her Foundation, Joseph Bonnet was selected by Florence to oversee the project, including preparing the estimate and surveying the construction of the instrument.<sup>100</sup> Bonnet was a leading organ player who trained at the Paris Conservatory and was appointed organist at the Eglise Saint Eustache in Paris where he remained between 1906-1928.<sup>101</sup> In 1921, Bonnet persuaded Florence to commission Casavant Frères from Québec to build and install a three manual, thirty-six stop, electric-action organ, an example of which did not yet exist in France, with pipes supplied by the John Abbey Manufacture.<sup>102</sup> The final estimate for the Opus 976 organ was submitted by Casavant Frères to “La Maison de Madame Blumenthal” in Paris on December 29, 1921.<sup>103</sup>

The presence of the organ in the Gothic room was less symbolic of religious associations and the Blumenthal’s interest in Catholic art, and perhaps instead served as a catalyst for Florence’s identity through music and salon culture. Florence’s interest in holding public music concerts in the Gothic room is similar to the role of music salons hosted by prominent, wealthy Jewish women in Berlin and Vienna beginning in the nineteenth century until the 1920s.<sup>104</sup> As a method of expanding women’s public sphere, the music salon was also a significant meeting place for artistic, intellectual, and political figures

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<sup>99</sup> See Alan Chong, “The Gothic experience: Re-creating history in American museums,” *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2015), pp. 481-491; Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 23.

<sup>100</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, pp. 23-24.

<sup>101</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Bonnet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Bonnet); <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/joseph-bonnet-mn0001369500/biography>

<sup>102</sup> The direct electric action system is one of various systems used in pipe organs to control the flow of air (wind) into the organ's pipes when the corresponding keys or pedals are depressed. The system employs electromagnets for all of its functions; keys and other controls operate electrical contacts; cables and switches direct the current to electromagnetic valves under the pipes. Douglas E. Bush ed., *The Organ: An Encyclopedia* (New York and London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), p. 13; Simon Couture, “Joseph Bonnet and Casavant Frères: The Story of a Fruitful Collaboration,” *Joseph Bonnet 1884-1994* (Lyon: Fédération Francophone des Amis de l’orgue, 1995), p. 57; Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 24.

<sup>103</sup> Casavant Frères Archives, Devis No. 450, December 29, 1921.

<sup>104</sup> Leon Botstein, “Music, Femininity, and Jewish Identity: The Tradition and Legacy of the Salon,” in Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 159.

and exerted an important influence on the cultural infrastructure of urban life.<sup>105</sup> The concerts in the Gothic room likely served as a method for Florence to penetrate French culture and society and as an opportunity for gender equality and assertion of female identity.<sup>106</sup>

In keeping with the overall Gothic-style theme of the room that incorporated period windows, doors, and chimneys, Florence and Cornillon decided to incorporate antique oak paneling in the exterior carcass of the organ.<sup>107</sup> The exterior woodwork, similar to the overall architectural style of the building, contained small panels with delicately carved Gothic arches while the larger rectangular panels at the bottom of the console had linen-fold panels similar to those used in the base of the organ case.<sup>108</sup> Figure 87 illustrates a photograph of the full-size model of the casework for the organ installed in the Gothic room and the console in the Casavant workshop. The overall scheme for the organ design and incorporation of older panelling is described in a letter from Cornillon to Casavant Frères in June 1922:

...Having found old-oak panels-I showed them to Mrs. Blumenthal who approved ... [t]he console ... Can not you make the solid carcass with a specific profile ... We will finish the exterior here with the addition of the old or new panels, tinted like we know how to do it here. Everything would be in oak. At present Mrs. Blumenthal is using these old panels for the sideboard, I'm going to draw the console and submit it to her this way for execution.<sup>109</sup>

The harmony and faithful integration of the organ into the Gothic room remained an important concern for Florence during the design and construction process, as illustrated in a letter from Casavant to Cornillon on September 25, 1922:

We received a letter from Mrs. Blumenthal, telling us, as she must have told you, that the existing plan can not be accepted ... If it is not possible to compose an

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 167.

<sup>107</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 24.

<sup>108</sup> Couture, p. 59.

<sup>109</sup> “Ayant trouvés des panneaux anciens-chêne-je les ai soumis à Madame Blumenthal, que les a acceptés...La console...Ne pouvez-vous en executer la carcasse solide sur un profil donné...Nous l’habillerons ici en traitant l’extérieur à l’ancienne avec de vieux panneaux ou de neufs, maquillés et teintés comme nous savons le faire ici. Le tout serait en chêne. A présent que Madame Blumenthal a adopté ces panneaux anciens pour le buffet, je vais dessiner la console et lui soumettre cette façon de l’exécuter.” Métrope and de la Grandière, pp. 24-25.

organ that is the right size for the space and does not disrupt the harmony of the room, the only thing left to do is to prepare a plan that will be acceptable to Mrs. Blumenthal and when we know what is the available space, we will see what will have to be cut down in order to store the organ here... It would be very helpful to find a solution to this question before the departure of Mrs. Blumenthal who must leave before October 15th. Possibly for Egypt, since Mr. Blumenthal told us that she would spend the winter in Egypt.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to its size, location in the Gothic room, and decision to integrate antique panelling, Florence Blumenthal also played an active role in approving the final design of the exterior decoration of the organ, as demonstrated in a letter from Cornillon to Casavant on December 15, 1922:

I am happy that you are able to place your organ in the location I gave you. I submitted a drawing of a balcony made of antique pieces to Mrs. Blumenthal. She does not like it; I am proposing another one. For the rose window, I believe we will arrive at a solution that pleases her: only one larger rosette with a lot of openwork. The part that is not open is not what you were thinking, in plaster...<sup>111</sup>

As the Gothic room was truly Florence's domain, and would be used for concerts and reunions for her Foundation, she presumed a leadership role during every detail of its planning and construction. Author and antiques dealer, René Brimo, recognized George and Florence Blumenthal's joint passion for Medieval art, but pinpointed Florence's principal role and ultimate goal in constructing the Gothic room:

...Florence Blumenthal, abetted by her husband George, cultivated a passion for medieval culture. In their Parisian apartment on the Boulevard Montmorency, she sought to capture the atmosphere of the Middle

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<sup>110</sup> "Nous recevons une lettre de Madame Blumenthal, nous disant, comme elle a dû vous le dire à vous même, que le plan tel que conçu ne peut être accepté...S'il n'est pas possible de composer un buffet d'orgue qui donne l'espace nécessaire et ne nuise pas à l'harmonie de la salle, il ne reste plus qu'à préparer un plan qui sera acceptable à Madame Blumenthal et quand nous saurons quel est l'espace disponible, nous verrons ce qu'il faudra retrancher pour l'orgue puisse s'y loger...Il serait bien désirable que cette question soit réglée avant le départ de Madame Blumenthal qui dit devoir partir avant le 15 octobre. Peut-être pour l'Egypte, car Monsieur Blumenthal nous a dit qu'elle passerait l'hiver en Egypte." Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 25.

<sup>111</sup> "Je suis heureux que vous puissiez placer votre orgue dans l'emplacement que je vous ai donné. J'avais soumis à Madame Blumenthal un dessin de balcon fait de morceaux anciens. Il ne lui plaît pas; j'en propose un autre. Pour la rosace, nous arriverons, je crois, à la solution qui lui plaît: une seule rosace plus grande et très ajourée. La partie non ajourée n'est pas ce que vous craigniez, en plâtre." Métrope and de la Grandière, pp. 25-26.



Ages.<sup>112</sup>

The organ was installed at the base of the circular tower at one corner of the Gothic room in August 1923.<sup>113</sup> (See Fig. 88) All organs, whatever the location, are treated from the point of view of the harmonization of the pipes, depending on the acoustics of the room in which it is housed. In contrast to the acoustics of a church that allows the sound of the pipes to spread its harmonious sounds, a concert hall, such as the Blumenthal's Gothic room, would not be able to provide the same result, even with the most meticulous of treatment. In order to create optimal dissemination of sound, the pipes of the organ were housed in the upper floors of the tower and an openwork rosette designed by Casavant was installed in the wall above. This particular type of Casavant organ would have had a rather heavy sound for a concert hall with probably very little reverberation. However, the novel quality of the electric keys that allowed for a wide range of notes was the first of its kind in Paris.<sup>114</sup> Similar to the design of the bathrooms by Rateau, the Blumenthals were engaged with the latest technology in the Gothic room.

Bonnet (and presumably Florence) was seemingly quite pleased with the final result as remarked in a letter he wrote to Claver Casavant in November 1923:

Your instrument at Madame Blumenthal's home behaves admirably; there has been no cipher since your departure. I have already given many recitals and everyone was enthusiastic about its charm and smoothness.<sup>115</sup>

Bonnet was apparently so impressed with the quality of Florence Blumenthal's Casavant organ in Paris that he decided to visit the organ collections in North America.<sup>116</sup>

Likewise, founder of Casavant Frères, Samuel Casavant, and composer and organist, Jules Vierene, also visited the Blumenthal's home in Paris. (See Fig. 89) Several contemporary visitors to the Gothic room also recounted their positive impressions of the organ and its surroundings, including Alphonse Mangeot, who, in his August 1923

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<sup>112</sup> Brimo, p. 246.

<sup>113</sup> Couture, p. 59; Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 26.;  
[www.normanj.plus.com/matching\\_organ\\_to\\_acoustics.html](http://www.normanj.plus.com/matching_organ_to_acoustics.html)

<sup>114</sup> Notes from conversation with organist Loïc Métrope, March 2, 2016.

<sup>115</sup> Couture, p. 60.

<sup>116</sup> Rollin Smith, *Louis Verne: Organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral* (Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1999), p. 698.

review in the magazine *Le Monde Musical*, stated:

Simply put, it is a marvel. Marvel of tone, with stops of a suavity of timbre that gives them a mystic scent; marvel of construction, by the numerous combinations and the precision of operation; marvel of integration in the Gothic Room, where all is pleasant to the eye and to good taste.<sup>117</sup>

The November 1923 issue of *Le Monde Musical* even featured the Blumenthal's Casavant organ on the front page and was described in detail by Bonnet.<sup>118</sup> (See Fig. 90) Particular praise was given to its perfect mechanism, the rapidity of the keyboard and pedalboard, and the balanced sound in a soft hew, "in keeping with the explicit request of the lady of the house."<sup>119</sup>

In addition to Mangeot, the English builder Henry Willis III inspected the organ with Bonnet and expressed his positive impressions in a letter to Casavant brothers on May 7, 1924:

During a recent trip to Paris, my friend M. Joseph Bonnet took me to see the organ you have recently erected at the residence of Mr. Blumenthal and I felt I should like to write and congratulate you on this very fine piece of work. It is the first instrument from your factory I have had the opportunity of inspecting and it was a real pleasure to see the fine materials and workmanship employed in the manufacture and the care bestowed on the tone finishing. Personally I should like to have heard more power and "Devil" from the Chorus Reeds and Plein Jeux but I hear that Mrs. Blumenthal insisted on these stops being soft and unobtrusive [sic]. However, even with the reeds and mixtures as they are, the ensemble is quite satisfying in its own particular way, the general blend being excellent.<sup>120</sup>

This letter again emphasizes Florence Blumenthal's organization and direct involvement with specific details regarding the commission of the organ. As a result of the publicity from *Le Monde Musical*, and the positive reviews from members of Florence's artistic circle, the Blumenthal organ contributed greatly to making Casavant known in France. In

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<sup>117</sup> Couture, pp. 58-59.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 58-59.

1929, Samuel Casavant wrote to his brother:

[My stay in Paris] made it clear to me that our name is very well known in France and that the Blumenthal organ has made an impact, mostly because its mechanism was new to the French.<sup>121</sup>

Although the organ was well-received by visitors and Florence Blumenthal's achievements were duly noted, there were nonetheless local critical accounts of the artificial nature of the assemblage of the antique architectural elements and the owner's taste.

An ogival chapel and an Empire pavilion had been reassembled in the park. The chapel came from ruins acquired at Sense, Etampes and Normandy. Everything was "authentic," including the furnishings: statues, ironwork, furniture, paintings. But, it must be recognized that it was also all artificial, and of American taste. The master was, however, of Alsatian origin.<sup>122</sup>

This response to an artificial authenticity, attributing it to "American taste," was likely a typical reaction to newly wealthy collectors of the period (discussed in more detail in Part 3), however it does not take into account that unauthentic antiquarian compilations have existed since the eighteenth century, nor credit those who have helped preserve historic monuments that would otherwise have been destroyed.<sup>123</sup> It is also interesting to note that Florence is perceived as the "*maître*," or master, of the house, and is considered an American with Alsatian roots, having been described as only Alsatian by the French in other instances. (See footnote 81)

Following its completion, the Gothic room primarily functioned as a meeting place for Florence's Foundation and a venue for the awards ceremony when the laureates were recognized with the *prix Blumenthal*.<sup>124</sup> (See Fig. 91) However, on the occasion when there were too many participants, members of the Foundation reunited at the Hotel

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60.

<sup>122</sup> "On avait remonté dans le parc une chapelle ogivale et un pavillon Empire. La chapelle provenait de ruines acquises à Sense, à Étampes et en Normandie. Tout était "authentique", et aussi tout ce qui la garnissait: statues, ferronneries, meubles, tableaux. Mais, il faut bien le reconnaître, tout cela était aussi artificiel, et de goût américain. Le maître de ces lieux était pourtant d'origine alsacienne..." de Fouquières, p. 196.

<sup>123</sup> John Harris, *Moving Rooms* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 27.

<sup>124</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 27.

Ritz.<sup>125</sup> The Gothic room also functioned as a space for receptions and concerts, allowing Florence to share her decorative conceit with other members of her circle.

It is quite certain that, if the "curious" were thus excluded, Florence Blumenthal knew to introduce a number of the privileged guests, surprised and delighted to discover the originality of this gothic room. It was during these social receptions, artist meetings, and concerts.<sup>126</sup>

Although the Gothic room was not regularly open to the public, Florence Blumenthal believed that it was nonetheless important to showcase the originality of the room to a select audience who attended these receptions, meetings, and concerts and the Blumenthals constructed the Gothic room with these public functions in mind. Similar to the commission and placement of the organ, this was another way of 'performing' the space and collecting for public engagement.

Amidst the fifteenth-century architectural elements, the decoration of the Gothic room, featuring a homogenous display of Renaissance furniture, paintings, sculpture, lighting, ceramics, and carpets, were deliberately arranged in small groupings along the perimeter for easy conversation. Long tables displaying Italian maiolica with benches provided ample seating for reunions and concerts. Several smaller tables served as surfaces to display small sculptures and floral arrangements. (See Figs. 92a-c)

Florence Blumenthal was a constant presence in the Gothic room in the form of a marble portrait bust completed in 1923 by close friend, artist, and member of the Foundation's sculpture committee, Paul-Maximilien Landowski (1875-1961) in 1923.<sup>127</sup> The bust was prominently displayed on a covered table on one side of the room in front of the main entrance, perhaps to welcome visitors and to serve as a visual reminder of the patron of

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> "Il est bien certain que, si les "curieux" étaient ainsi exclus, Florence Blumenthal a su introduire nombre de privilégiés, étonnés et ravis de découvrir l'originalité de cette salle gothique. C'était au cours de réceptions mondaines, de réunions d'artistes, de concerts." *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Michèle Lefrançois, *Landowski: L'oeuvre sculpté* (Paris: Éditions Créaphis, 2009), p. 465; [http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=record\\_ID:npg\\_68.10\\_CU](http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=record_ID:npg_68.10_CU); See G. & F. B. Scrapbook. Similar to Florence Blumenthal's commission and placement of a contemporary portrait bust in her *Salle Gothique*, Isabella Stewart Gardner also commissioned a modern self-portrait by John Singer Sargent portrait which she installed in the corner of her Gothic Room in Boston.

the Gothic room. (See Fig. 93 and Part 1 for more information on Landowski's portrait bust of Florence Blumenthal)

Similar to the courtyard arrangement in the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence, Isabella Stewart Gardner's Fenway Court that opened to the public in 1903, likely served as inspiration for the couple's Gothic room in Paris. As an early collector of Gothic Art in America, Gardner decorated her Gothic Room with a mixture of devotional and domestic objects, including stained glass, sculpture, and furniture, and it served as her private refuge and for only her closest friends during her lifetime.<sup>128</sup> The room also prominently displays a contemporary life-size portrait of the patron as a modern-day Madonna, painted in 1888 by John Singer Sargent. Additionally, Gardner's ground floor Chapel functioned as an active devotional space and features an altar (formerly used during Mass), as well as several liturgical items, including an early seventeenth century Italian ivory crucifix.<sup>129</sup>

The Blumenthals' combined stylistic elements, including liturgical and secular objects, such as an organ, stained glass windows, sculpture, furniture, and paintings, were perhaps modelled on Gardner's rooms. The Blumenthals, however, used the space purely for secular purposes.<sup>130</sup> Just as Gardner displayed her portrait by Sargent in the Gothic Room, Florence Blumenthal used the Gothic room to display the contemporary portrait bust by Landowski, identifying its patron through art.<sup>131</sup>

The Blumenthals may have also been influenced by several earlier models of Gothic rooms in both the United States and Europe. Gothic rooms became increasingly popular at the turn of the twentieth century and often appeared in the homes of American elites, some of which were opened to the public and were renowned internationally.<sup>132</sup> The Gothic Room at Marble House in Newport, Rhode Island, installed by Alva Vanderbilt in

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<sup>128</sup> <https://www.gardnermuseum.org/experience/rooms/gothic-room>

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.gardnermuseum.org/experience/rooms/chapel>.

<sup>130</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 15; Casavant Frères Archives.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

<sup>132</sup> See Virginia Brilliant, "Introduction: Gothic art in America," *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2015), pp. 291-295.

1892, represented the earliest example in America and displayed Medieval and Renaissance art amidst a period architectural context.<sup>133</sup> Other American examples include Stanford White's Gothic Hall for Clarence Mackay's Harbor Hill residence on Long Island built between 1889-1902, and the gothic style library for senator William A. Clark's Fifth Avenue home between 1905-1912.<sup>134</sup> Whereas the Blumenthal's Gothic room emphasized the inclusion of historic architectural elements, many of these other great gothic rooms and halls primarily functioned as showcases for arms and armour, cavalry, and works of art. Nonetheless, it is extremely likely that George and Florence Blumenthal visited such rooms along the East Coast in America and were exposed to these influences.

In Europe, several nineteenth century examples of Gothic interiors served as reference to tradespeople for reproduction in domestic settings. These included the Smoking Room at Waddesdon Manor built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in 1880; the Renaissance and Medieval collections assembled by the dealer Frédéric Spitzer (1816-1890), who constructed the residence known as the "Spitzer Museum" in which complete stylistic harmony existed between the architectural details, furnishings and the arrangement of the collection; the Hotel Gaillard, a Renaissance castle built by wealthy Parisian banker Emile Gaillard between 1878-1882, which today serves as the Banque de France; the Duke of Aumale's Gothic room at Chantilly (1830-1848); the fourteenth century Hôtel de Cluny in Paris which opened to the public in 1843; and the National Museum of French Monuments founded in 1879 by the architect Viollet le Duc that united an assembly of casts of French sculpture and architectural elements (first conceived by Alexandre Lenoir in 1795 as the Museum of French Monuments) served as reference to tradespeople for reproduction in domestic settings.<sup>135</sup> In all of these cases, the influence and employment of the Gothic style was meant to improve the quality of interiors and to serve as a tasteful display of wealth without a primary concern for authenticity. Although these revival interiors represented a romanticized view of the Gothic style, the display and arrangement of the objects and architectural program indicated a sign of knowledge,

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

wealth, and culture on the part of the patron.<sup>136</sup> While they did not visit Waddesdon Manor and did not witness Spitzer's collection in situ, the Blumenthals were likely equally aware of these interiors and collections in Europe through their travels.<sup>137</sup>

In contrast to the development of the Gothic revival style in Europe that occurred as early as the mid-eighteenth century, the emergence of the Gothic revival style and interest in medieval art in the United States was greatly influenced by two key events that occurred at the beginning of World War I. In 1914, the Metropolitan Museum of Art mounted a loan exhibition of J.P. Morgan's collection, featuring many examples of religious art, which resulted in a significant impact on the public who had not yet been exposed to this style of art in an American museum.<sup>138</sup> As the construction and decoration of their Park Avenue house was not yet complete, and it was still early in their collecting partnership, the Blumenthals were likely influenced by this pivotal exhibition.

Also in 1914, at the same moment as Morgan's exhibition, American sculptor and collector, George Grey Barnard (1863-1938), opened his own collection of medieval art to the public in Washington Heights in New York City, entitled George Grey Barnard's Cloisters, which included architectural fragments from French villages and monumental sculpture of the Middle Ages amidst a brick church-like setting.<sup>139</sup> Barnard's desire to create an atmosphere or period setting to view art of the Middle Ages, which was often lit by candlelight and presented by monks, was typical of the display during the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>140</sup> (See Part 3 for more information on George Blumenthal's use of candlelight at his Park Avenue residence) As more Americans began travelling to Europe at the end of World War I, interest in medieval art and Gothic

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<sup>136</sup> See Paul F. Miller, "Alva Vanderbilt Belmont, *arbiter elegantiarum*, and her Gothic salon at Newport, Rhode Island," *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2015), pp. 347-362.

<sup>137</sup> The Blumenthals do not feature in the visitors' book at Waddesdon Manor. Correspondence with Mia Jackson, November 16, 2017.

<sup>138</sup> Notes from Dr. Elizabeth Bradford Smith's paper, "Medieval Art in America, Patterns of Collecting 1800-1940."

<sup>139</sup> Barnard's collection would later be acquired by John D. Rockefeller for integration into The Cloisters collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. *Ibid*; <http://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2006/the-cloisters-a-history>.

<sup>140</sup> Alan Chong, "The Gothic experience: Re-creating history in American museums," p. 484.

architecture grew and museums and private collectors began avidly collecting medieval and gothic art. Portals and cloisters were subsequently erected in several public museums, emulating Barnard's display, and American curators began mounting new exhibitions of medieval art.<sup>141</sup>

Thus, the Blumenthal's commission and personal dedication to construct a Gothic room in Paris in 1920 coincides with the collecting habits of other contemporary collectors, the emergence of the American museological display of this period of art, and the availability of these fragments in Paris. As European émigrés to the United States, one might assume that the Blumenthals' interest in the neo-Gothic style was a result of George Blumenthal's Germanic predilection for the Gothic, however George and Florence Blumenthal's commission and personal dedication to construct a Gothic room in Paris during this period demonstrates instead a desire to emulate an established collecting model in the United States and a desire to conform to an established White Anglo-Saxon Protestant taste popular during the twentieth century. Thus, their practices emulated examples of American behaviour, but in France.

Cultural philanthropist and art patron of Chicago, Kate Sturges Buckingham, demonstrated an analogous taste for gothic art and donated a gothic room to the Art Institute of Chicago, reminiscent in design and execution to the Blumenthal's Gothic room.<sup>142</sup> Of the same generation as George Blumenthal, Buckingham collected medieval sculpture, tapestries, and decorative arts that she donated to the Art Institute of Chicago in 1924 as a memorial to her sister where the collection was subsequently installed in The Lucy Maud Buckingham Memorial Gothic Room.<sup>143</sup> (Fig. 94) The "gothic period room" was the first and largest of the series of period rooms at the Art Institute and the only one

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 481-482.

<sup>142</sup> Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, folder 5-001 2-13).

<sup>143</sup> Eleanor Jewett, "Rich Woman's Gifts to Art Made Quietly," *The Chicago Tribune* (January 9, 1938); The Art Institute of Chicago Forty-Sixth Annual Report for the Year 1924, p. 17. The Trustees Report described the The Lucy Maud Buckingham Memorial Gothic room as "...the most important acquisition in the history of the department. With its original doorways, windows, corbels and fireplace, its sculpture, furniture and tapestries, a new standard is set for the museum both in acquisitions and in installation."



of its size in the United States.<sup>144</sup>

Buckingham invested \$300,000 to outfit the room and was directly inspired by George Grey Barnard's Cloisters in Fort Washington, New York, Isabella Stewart Gardner's Gothic room in Boston, and the Blumenthal's Gothic room in Paris.<sup>145</sup> Since Buckingham did not use a decorator or interior decorator to help form her collection, she relied heavily on the advice of dealers in New York and Paris, as well as that of her close friend, Florence Blumenthal.<sup>146</sup> During the assembly of her Gothic collection between 1923-1924, Buckingham asked Louis Cornillon to send her photographs of sculpture in his collection that he planned to sell, including provenance, annotations, and descriptions that she received in March 1923.<sup>147</sup> Cornillon also provided photographs of a portal that he discovered and sold to Mrs. Blumenthal, as well as information on two fifteenth-century doors from Strasbourg that he was unable to secure for Florence Blumenthal at her approved price.<sup>148</sup> In addition to selling fifteenth-century doorways and other Gothic material to Buckingham, Cornillon asked her to kindly share the photographs of his collection with the Art Institute and her collector friends.<sup>149</sup>

Following Buckingham's death in 1938, she bequeathed a set of thirteen interior photographs of the Blumenthal's Gothic room to the Art Institute of Chicago that she likely used as a reference model for her own room.<sup>150</sup> It is possible that Cornillon may have included these thirteen photos of the recently completed Blumenthal Gothic room with the photographs of his collection, or perhaps they were sent to Buckingham by

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* The room was referred to as a "gothic period room" by the Art Institute of Chicago. <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/Ryerson/Making-History/2> (accessed December 3, 2015).

<sup>145</sup> Christina Nielsen, "To Step into Another World": Building a Medieval Collection at The Art Institute of Chicago," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, vol. 30, No. 2, Devotion and Splendor: Medieval Art at the Art Institute of Chicago (2004), p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, folder 5-001 2-13).

<sup>148</sup> Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, Kate Buckingham correspondence 1914-1927, 2-2.

<sup>149</sup> Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, folder 5-001 2-13.

<sup>150</sup> The Art Institute of Chicago Archival Image Collection, BLC: 56745-56757. The Art Institute of Chicago does not conserve any additional provenance information for the thirteen photos of the Blumenthal's Gothic room that Buckingham donated to the Museum in 1938.

Florence Blumenthal directly. It remains unclear if Buckingham ever visited the Blumenthal's home in Paris, however Florence most certainly had a direct influence on Buckingham.

To furnish the Gothic Room at the Art Institute, Buckingham also purchased objects from dealers Jacques Seligmann & Fils, French & Company, and Alavoine & Co (all of whom worked closely with the Blumenthals in both New York and France), as well as R. Stora & Co, Paris, George Joseph Demotte, Paris and New York, Joseph Brummer, Goldschmidt & Co, Harding, New York, P. Jackson Higgs, Anderson Galleries, L. Maurice, Emile Tabbagh, D.G. Kelekian, H. Kevorkian, and Parish-Watson & Co.<sup>151</sup> Perhaps the creation of a gothic room in America during this period required many more dealers and decorators than the Blumenthals required in Paris as there was not as much supply available locally.

The Gothic Room at the Art Institute incorporated several similar design elements to the Blumenthal's Gothic room, including a high vaulted ceiling, ogival windows, a large fifteenth-century fireplace with stone mantle, twelfth-century corbels, a limestone portal, and fluted pillars, and was also similarly decorated with a reliquary, Madonna and Child, and carved furniture.<sup>152</sup> In February 1924, following the installation of the room at the Art Institute, Cornillon wrote to the director of the Museum to congratulate him on the completion and success of the room and to convey that he was the one who executed the drawings and contrived the design of the arched vault for its truly Gothic effect, and asking for photographs of the finished product.<sup>153</sup>

In 1925, likely a result of George Blumenthal's retirement from Lazard Frères and the

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<sup>151</sup> Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, folder 5-001 2-13. The Blumenthals were also clients of Joseph Brummer, but, unlike Kate Buckingham, did not acquire any objects from him for their Gothic room. According to records, George Blumenthal purchased a woven silver drawstring bag from a vanity case on December 31, 1923 for 120 francs, likely for Florence Blumenthal. Brummer Gallery Records, Digital Collections, Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, <http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16028coll9>.

<sup>152</sup> The Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, folder 5-001 2-13.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

couple's intent to spend more time in France, the Blumenthals acquired two additional plots of adjacent land in the sixteenth district. On January 5, 1925, while listed at 13-15, Boulevard de Montmorency, Florence Blumenthal acquired the property 5, Boulevard de Montmorency from several members of the Cuchet Henrioux family.<sup>154</sup> On October 23, 1925, George Blumenthal acquired a separate five-story building, including cave, basement, entry, and first and second floors, situated within an enclosed garden at 11, Boulevard de Montmorency from Madame Blanche Antoinette Julie Briffault des Carrierès, widow of Adrien Louis Dumesnil.<sup>155</sup> The building contained a large kitchen on the lower level, office, boiler, cave made of wood, two additional caves, and a vaulted cellar. A service staircase connected to the entry level where a vestibule and entry containing a large staircase.<sup>156</sup>

Sale of 15, Boulevard de Montmorency, the collections, and dismantling of the *Salle Gothique*:

The enlargement of the property, as well as the construction and modification of smaller houses on the grounds, continued until June 11, 1930, just a few months before Florence's death.<sup>157</sup> Following Florence's death from bronchial pneumonia in Paris on September 21, 1930, and before returning to New York for the burial, George Blumenthal organized a secular ceremony in the Gothic room that had been decorated with orchids for the occasion.<sup>158</sup> (Fig. 95) More than one thousand visitors, including politicians,

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<sup>154</sup> Notary M. Robert Revel, Act 41843. This deed from the Paris notary also references the state of matrimonial affairs between George and Florence Blumenthal referencing the absence of marriage contract stating the separating of goods, as previously noted in deeds from 1922.

<sup>155</sup> Notary M. Robert Revel, Act 46954.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* According to the deed, both George and Florence Blumenthal were originally documented together as the purchasers of this adjacent building to their property at 13-15, Boulevard de Montmorency, however Florence Blumenthal's name was subsequently crossed out.

<sup>157</sup> Commission du Vieux Paris, Casier archéologique, 16e-73. Florence Blumenthal died in Paris on September 21, 1930. The ultimate arrangement and scale of the Blumenthal's garden on the Boulevard Montmorency property was described in 1936 as "...clos de hauts treillages revêtait la forme d'un parc délicieux planté de grands arbres...roseaies, arceaux fleuris, allées éclatantes étaient complétées par des vergers opulents précieusement cultivés (enclosed by high trellises took the form of a delicious park with mature trees ... rose gardens, flower arches, bright aisles were complemented by opulent orchards carefully cultivated." André Armyvelde, "L'Illustration," n. 4886 (October 24, 1936), pp. 238, 247; Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 13.

<sup>158</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 32.

artists, and high society attended.<sup>159</sup> As remarked in the New York Herald Tribune, “The finest organ in France, a special love of Mrs. Blumenthal, remained closed and quiet.”<sup>160</sup> The ceremony, environment, and sequence of events were also articulately detailed in the local press.

The Chapel on the property of the Boulevard Montmorency, where Madame Florence Blumenthal rests under a pile of lilies and orchids, hosted, yesterday afternoon, a moving procession of those who came to pay their last respects to the great benefactress and to a great friend of France. The Minister of Education and the Under-Secretary of State at the Beaux-Arts brought the condolences of the government. The laureates of the American foundation served as the guard of honour all day and night. Academics, literaries, and well-known artists, most of whom served on the Foundation's jury, professors of medicine and surgery, marched alongside all the brave people for whom she had helped. At seven o'clock, the body was transported to the crypt of the American church on the Avenue George V. It will rest there until the first French liner departs for America. Mrs. Florence Blumenthal, faithful to her friendship for our country until the last hour, had, indeed, expressed the desire to make her final crossing aboard a boat flying the tricolor flag.<sup>161</sup>

As a result of Florence's death, George Blumenthal made the decision to sell the houses in both Paris and Grasse which had been so closely associated with her, however it would take several years to complete the sale of portions of the collection, donate select objects French, British, and American art museums, and liquidate both French properties.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> “La chapelle de la propriété du boulevard Montmorency, où Mme Florence Blumenthal repose sous un amoncellement de lis et d'orchidées, a vu, hier après-midi, l'émouvant défilé de tous ceux qui venaient rendre un dernier hommage à la grande bienfaitrice et à la grande amie de la France. Le ministre de l'Instruction publique et le sous-secrétaire d'Etat aux Beaux-Arts ont apporté les condoléances du gouvernement. La garde d'honneur avait été montée toute la nuit et tout le jour par les lauréats de la foundation américaine. De académiciens, des hommes de lettres et des artistes réputés, pour la plupart appartenant au jury de la Fondation, des maîtres de la médecine et de la chirurgie, ont défilé au coté de tous les braves gens à qui la disparue était venue en aide. A sept heures, le corps a été transporté dans le crypte de l'église américaine de l'avenue George-V. Il y reposera jusqu'au départ du premier paquebot français pour l'Amérique. Mme Florence Blumenthal, fidèle jusqu'à la dernière heure à son amitié pour notre pays, avait, en effet, exprimé le désir de faire son ultime traversée à bord d'un bateau battant pavillon tricolore.” “Un dernier hommage de Paris à Mme Blumenthal,” G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

<sup>162</sup> Métrope and de la Grandière, p. 32.

Although he had not yet made definite plans for the disposal of the Paris property or demolition of the Gothic room, George Blumenthal decided to sell the contents of his French houses through Galerie Georges Petit, first through a small sale of furniture and linen on October 21-22, 1932, followed by a second, larger sale, of works of art on December 1-2, 1932.<sup>163</sup> According to records, he adamantly wished to “get rid of everything” before his definitive departure from Paris on September 5, 1932.<sup>164</sup> While the date of the sale occurred almost three months later, George Blumenthal’s desire to sell the houses and collection in France demonstrates the Blumenthal’s ultimate goal of using collecting as a form of public dissemination. As Arjun Appadurai argues in *The Social Life of Things, Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, commodities have a particular social potential and their circulation and exchange in society creates value. Auctions accentuate this dimension of objects.<sup>165</sup>

In accordance with the convention of the period, the sale catalogue of the December auction was titled “Collection of M. George Blumenthal” and was described as “the very important collection united in his townhouse in Paris,” including paintings, drawings, furniture, porcelain, sculpture, and tapestries.<sup>166</sup> Surprisingly, having died just two years earlier, Florence Blumenthal’s name was not mentioned in the catalogue, marginalizing her identity as a collector and the couple’s dual partnership.

The first day of the sale featured ninety-five lots consisting of engravings, watercolors, drawings, and pastels, old master paintings, mounted and un-mounted porcelains, showcase objects, and other objects of assorted nature. The second day of the sale featured eighty-nine lots consisting of bronzes, sculpture, furniture and chairs, screens and fans, and rugs and carpets.<sup>167</sup> (Fig. 96a-b) As the dealer Germain Seligmann remarked, “[f]or the last three years there hasn’t been an auction of such

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<sup>163</sup> Archives de Paris D43E3 125.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things, Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3, 6, 15.

<sup>166</sup> See “Blumenthal Collection, Catalogue des objets d’arts et d’ameublement du XVIIIe siècle. Tableaux anciens, dessins – gravures,” (Dec. 1-2, 1932). Galerie Georges Petit, 1932, Paris.

<sup>167</sup> “Blumenthal Collection, Catalogue des objets d’arts et d’ameublement du XVIIIe siècle. Tableaux anciens, dessins – gravures,” (Sale, Dec. 1-2, 1932). Galerie Georges Petit, 1932.

importance...[t]his auction is an answer to those who thought that paintings and works of art would reflect the trend of general depression.”<sup>168</sup>

In preparation for the auction, three thousand two hundred illustrated catalogues were printed and distributed, as well as four thousand ordinary catalogues without illustrations and in a smaller format.<sup>169</sup> Substantial publicity for the Blumenthal sale took place and advertisements and articles were placed in international art periodicals, such as *Connoisseur* and *Burlington Magazine* in London, *Beaux-Arts* and *La Gazette Drouot* in Paris, *Pantheon* in Munich, and *The Art Digest* in the States.<sup>170</sup> A particular article in the daily newspaper, *Paris Midi*, referred to the collection of eighteenth-century French objects as “of the highest class and taste.”<sup>171</sup> (See Fig. 97)

Several museums, such as the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York expressed interest in specific lots from the sale. Even George Blumenthal himself hoped to buy back one of the objects from his collection.<sup>172</sup> In a letter dated November 12, 1932, George Blumenthal wrote to the auctioneer M. Maurice Ader giving the dealer, Jacques Seligmann, permission to purchase twenty-one lots on his behalf.<sup>173</sup> While it is not clear why George Blumenthal ultimately sold works of art from his collection that he intended to buy back, it was perhaps a strategic financial tactic to increase bids and interest in the sale.

Following delivery to Galerie Georges Petit between November 28 and December 2, 1932, the Blumenthal collection was insured for eight million francs (approximately £4.4 million today), a substantial amount for the time.<sup>174</sup> It would seem unexpected, therefore,

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<sup>168</sup> Arthur R. Blumenthal, p. 8.

<sup>169</sup> Archives de Paris D42E3 170, Folder number 98, September 3, 1932.

<sup>170</sup> Archives de Paris D43E3 125.

<sup>171</sup> Archives de Paris 2482 W 106.

<sup>172</sup> The object from the Blumenthal collection that received the most interest from bidders was lot 168, the eighteenth-century mechanical table made by Jean Henry Riesener for Queen Marie-Antoinette, for which George Blumenthal submitted a maximum bid of 650,000 francs. Archives de Paris D43E3 125.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* This figure is based on today’s conversion rate of \$5.6 million.

for a successful businessman, like George Blumenthal, to consign his cherished collection of art during the height of the Great Depression. To compensate for the fact that many pieces were largely undervalued, Blumenthal specifically requested price adjustments for the individual lots that received the most attention and were the most likely to sell.<sup>175</sup>

The Gazette de l'Hôtel Drouot reported that the Blumenthal sale of December 1932 earned a total of 8,339,350 francs (approximately £4.6 million today).<sup>176</sup> A list of some of the names of the buyers at the sale were also revealed, including dealers Germain and Jean Seligmann, financier Georges Jay Gould, and Mr. Citroen.<sup>177</sup> The Louvre Museum also purchased objects from the sale, including a cachepot decorated in Chinese lacquer and gilt-bronze of about 1745, previously belonging to Madame Pompadour and the daughters of Louis XV at Bellevue Castle and Saint-Cloud (Fig. 98), as well as a drawing by Jean-Honoré Fragonard entitled "The Adoration of the Shepherds" of about 1776.<sup>178</sup> (Fig. 99)

There are conflicting reports about George Blumenthal's reaction to the results of the December 1932 sale of works of art. Auction records reveal that he expressed disappointment and criticized the experts for their lack of courage regarding attributions and rejected the proposal of a third sale.<sup>179</sup> Another first-hand account documents Blumenthal's delight with the sale results, despite the fact that he lost money:

When the crisis was at its height the American banker George Blumenthal sold his collections at auction. He lost thirty per cent on his cost prices on his cost prices and his friends were full of commiseration. 'Don't you worry about me, I'm delighted!' he told them philosophically. 'It

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> The Louvre Museum was able to acquire the Blumenthal cachepot before it went to auction in December 1932 (Object Department, Louvre Museum, OA 8243). Although the Fragonard drawing was part of the Blumenthal sale in 1932, the Louvre Museum did not purchase it until 1968. (Department of Prints and Drawings, Louvre Museum, 4031875).

<sup>179</sup> Archives de Paris D43E3 125.

represents a degree of success I hardly hoped for-I am losing seventy-five percent on my securities.'<sup>180</sup>

A second sale consisting of George Blumenthal's book and manuscript collection took place on December 5-7, 1932 at Galerie Georges Petit, totalling 2,712,655 francs, (approximately £1.489 today).<sup>181</sup> Although Blumenthal was not in favor of advanced publicity for this sale, it attracted important collectors and museums, including Henry de Rothschild and the Louvre.<sup>182</sup> A third, and final, sale from George Blumenthal's book collection took place on June 6-7, 1933 at Hôtel Drouot in Paris, totaling 66,824 francs (approximately £50,000 today).<sup>183</sup>

Subsequent smaller sales of household items from the Blumenthal's Parisian residence on the Boulevard de Montmorency, including antique and modern silver, took place at Hôtel Drouot on June 19-20 and June 28, 1933, however the sale titles did not reference George Blumenthal's name specifically.<sup>184</sup>

In April 1933, around the same time as the auction sales in Paris, George Blumenthal first proposed the idea of presenting various doors, windows, and medieval stonework from the Gothic room to then Metropolitan Museum of Art director Joseph Breck (1885-1933, presidency 1932-1933), recommending integration of these Gothic architectural elements into the future Cloisters Museum, an extension of the Metropolitan Museum, planned for construction between 1934-1941.<sup>185</sup> The overlapping of George Blumenthal's presidency of the Metropolitan Museum of Art with the design and construction of this new project, in conjunction with his plan to sell the Paris house, explains the timing of these gifts. In

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<sup>180</sup> Jacques Helft, *Treasures Hunt, Memoirs of an Antique Dealer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 115.

<sup>181</sup> Archives de Paris D43E3 125. This figure is based on today's conversion rate of \$1.894 million.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* This figure is based on today's conversion rate of \$63,000.

<sup>184</sup> See "Catalogue des objets d'art et d'ameublement, tableaux, gravures, faïences, porcelaines d'Allemagne, porcelaines tendres françaises, porcelaines et matières dures de la Chine..., sièges et meubles... appartenant à M. George Blumenthal... : deuxième vente." (April 5-6, 1933), Hôtel Drouot, Paris.

<sup>185</sup> Rockefeller Archive Center, Cultural Interests MMA-Cloisters, 1929-1935, Group III 2E, Folder 29; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.



addition, the incorporation of the Blumenthal's architectural elements into the Cloisters was consistent with the couple's intention to share the Gothic room with the public. Provided that the expense for the removal and transportation of the elements from Paris would be included in the construction and installation costs of the Cloisters (not exceeding \$2,500), and was approved by John D. Rockefeller Jr. who agreed to finance the transportation costs, Joseph Breck fully supported George Blumenthal's donation proposition and was confident that the Museum could use all the stonework to excellent effect.<sup>186</sup>

Following an initial selection of stonework, Rateau was hired in July 1933 to assist with its removal, packing, and transportation from the Gothic room in Paris to New York, illustrating an ongoing relationship between the designer and George Blumenthal even after Florence's death. Jacques Seligmann was also employed to monitor and facilitate Rateau's work.<sup>187</sup>

The shipment arrived in New York in January 1934, although the cost was over budget as the removal proved more complicated than previously anticipated.<sup>188</sup> In July 1934, Breck's successor, James Rorimer, visited the Blumenthal's Paris residence and selected additional stonework for integration into the Cloisters.<sup>189</sup> Louis Cornillon and successor, Jean Poly, were hired to direct the remaining disassembly of stone, however the removal of multiple architectural elements at one given time was limited so as to maintain the building's safety, as it still housed the Casavant organ.<sup>190</sup> Since Breck initially overlooked some of the more important architectural elements from the Gothic room, it is possible that he was either unaware that he could choose from any or all of the elements, or that they had not been initially offered by George Blumenthal at the time. Opportunely, George Blumenthal was content to contribute supplementary elements from

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<sup>186</sup> Rockefeller Archive Center, Cultural Interests MMA-Cloisters, 1929-1935, Group III 2E, Folder 29; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>187</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>188</sup> The higher costs of de-installation were due to the presence of cement used to reinforce the antique stone. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

the Gothic room (as long as they were not classified by the French government) and Rockefeller approved the later additions and funded the auxiliary shipping expenses.<sup>191</sup> The final shipment arrived in New York in February 1935.<sup>192</sup> Figure 100a-c illustrates the integration of the covered arcades and doorways, formerly part of the Blumenthal's Gothic room, into the Cloisters museum.

The fifteenth-century door from the hôtel Coeffiers d'Effiat was the only architectural element from the Gothic room to remain in France and was eventually donated by George Blumenthal to the Musée Nationaux in 1934 for display in the Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture galleries at the Louvre.<sup>193</sup> In July 1934, sculpture curator, Paul Vitry, announced George Blumenthal's offer to donate the historic door to the Department had been accepted.<sup>194</sup> In the event that the Louvre decided not to acquire the door from the Gothic room, George Blumenthal intended to have it de-classified as an historic monument and shipped to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.<sup>195</sup> (It is unclear if it was actually possible to convince French authorities to de-classify a historic monument as Florence Blumenthal and Cornillon would have likely requested this during correspondence at the time of the door's acquisition) Although the door contained particular French patrimonial importance, it was perhaps the additional pressure that George Blumenthal placed on the Louvre, by threatening to send it to New York, that ultimately persuaded the museum to accept the gift.

The Casavant organ from the Gothic room was eventually dismantled in the summer of 1935 and re-installed in a new monastery in the Abbaye de la Pierre Qui Vire's

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<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, 0081/075-16 Restauration d'édifice de Paris, série generale; Object file RF 2201, RF 2202, RF 2203, Musée du Louvre, Département des Sculptures. In addition to the door, George Blumenthal also donated three sculptures from the Gothic room to the Sculpture Department at the Louvre in 1932, including a Virgin and Child dated 1612, two figures in civil dress under an arcade, and an early sixteenth century head of a woman.

<sup>194</sup> Object file RF 2389, Musée du Louvre, Département des Sculptures.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

foundation at the Abbaye Saint-Benoit d'En Calcat in the southwest region of Tarn, France where it still remains today.<sup>196</sup>

### Château de Malbosc, Grasse

Not long after the completion of the expansion and renovation of her Boulevard de Montmorency home in Paris, Florence Blumenthal purchased the Château de Malbosc in the town of Grasse in the south of France on March 24, 1925 from Aubert-Clément Jacques Parent and his wife Emilie Marie Magdeleine Eugénie Schnetzler for 700,000 francs.<sup>197</sup> (See Figs. 101a-b) The etymology of the word “Malbosc” refers to a dangerous forest inhabited by robbers and it is therefore believed that, since Antiquity, the region was covered by a thick forest and used by robbers who threatened the region.<sup>198</sup> The vast Malbosc forest was cleared during the Middle Ages and was inhabited by the people of Grasse shortly thereafter as it was a desirable location with rich soil.<sup>199</sup> Ownership of the Malbosc property can be traced back to the sixteenth century and featured a country house that was later enlarged and transformed into a chateau at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>200</sup> As one historian commented, the nomenclature of the chateau occurred under the ownership under the Lombard de Gourdon and de Villeneuve-Bargemon families between 1741-1875:

In the neighborhood of Malbosc, one notices that the area successively belonged to the Lombard de Gourdon and the Villeneuve-Bargemon families and which is designated today under the name of Château de Malbosc.<sup>201</sup>

Florence, whose continuous fragile state was often noted, suffered from poor health for many years and likely wished to spend increasing amounts of time in a region of the south of France appreciated for its temperate climate, vegetation, and proximity to the

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<sup>196</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>197</sup> *Dépôt du Cahier des Charges du Lotissement et Etablissement de l'Origine de Propriété du Château de Malbosc*, vol. 3439, no. 25, Transcription du 23 mai 1954.

<sup>198</sup> *Domaine du Château de Malbosc* (Cannes: Imprimerie Devaye, 1955), p. 6.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Domaine du Château de Malbosc* (Cannes: Imprimerie Devaye, 1955), p. 10.

<sup>201</sup> “On remarque dans le quartier de Malbosc le domaine qui a appartenu successivement aux familles Lombard de Gourdon et de Villeneuve-Bargemon et qui est désigné aujourd’hui sous le nom de Château de Malbosc.” *Domaine du Château de Malbosc* (Cannes: Imprimerie Devaye, 1955), p. 8.

sea.<sup>202</sup> Prior to purchasing Malbosc, the Blumenthals spent several years searching for a residence in Provence and were accustomed to spending summers in the south of France where they were often pictured in society pages in Aix-les-Bains.<sup>203</sup> (See Figs. 102a-b) A letter from Aix-les-Bains published in the Parisian newspaper, *Le Gaulois*, listed George and Florence Blumenthal among the daily personalities frequenting the theatre, the baths, or the Villa, along with English nobility, American businessmen, and French novelists.<sup>204</sup>

The presence of a wealthy American and British expatriate community during the summer season in the south of France became more prevalent following World War I. Comparable to the Blumenthal's social circle in Paris, there was also an artistic community of artists, writers, and art dealers and several contemporary authors depict this occurrence in their novels, including F. Scott Fitzgerald, who first came to the Riviera in 1924 where he wrote much of *The Great Gatsby* and began *Tender is the Night* set among American expats on the Côte d'Azur. In 1920, Edith Wharton wrote her novel *The Age of Innocence* while staying in Provence. From the 1920's onwards, many of the wealthy expats traveled from Calais via Le Train Bleu, including Agatha Christie, who commemorated the luxury train in *The Mystery of the Blue Train* in 1928.<sup>205</sup>

Following her initial purchase, Florence acquired a second strip of land on December 5, 1925 from Joseph Louis Ciaï and his wife Lucie Marie Martel.<sup>206</sup> On April 16, 1926, Florence acquired an additional parcel of land measuring approximately five thousand square meters in the Saint-Jean quarter to enlarge the Malbosc property domain from Pierre Emile Silvy and his wife Pauline Virginie Angèle Lupi and hired landscape architect Jacques Gréber (1882-1962) to transform the gardens.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

<sup>203</sup> Olivier-Vial and Rateau. p. 132; "Les Alpes Française et la Côte d'Azur, Aix-les-Bains (29 Août)," G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

<sup>204</sup> "Lettre d'Aix-les-Bains," *Le Gaulois* (August 19, 1923), p. 2.

<sup>205</sup> [www.connexionfrance.com/french-life-inspiration-generations-of-authors-news-article.html](http://www.connexionfrance.com/french-life-inspiration-generations-of-authors-news-article.html).

<sup>206</sup> Dépôt du Cahier des Charges du Lotissement et Etablissement de l'Origine de Propriété du Château de Malbosc, Vol 3439, no. 25, Transcription du 23 mai 1954.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*; *Domaine du Château de Malbosc* (Cannes: Imprimerie Devaye, 1955), p. 10; Correspondence with Gisèle Rolando, June 21, 2017 and September 11, 2017. Jacques Gréber's plans for the gardens at Malbosc are conserved today in the Fonds Arluc in the Archives

Just moved in, Mrs. G. Blumenthal conceived the grandiose project of transforming the whole area...and a marvelous garden, of which she entrusted the execution to Mr. Jacques Gréber ... At the chateau of Malbosc ... the majestically cascading terraces seem like vast bleachers that nature and art fit into place for rest and contemplation, varying the viewpoints and horizon. Trees cut into geometric shapes mix with trees growing freely. Fountains and gutters here; flower beds with arabesque designs there offer different pictures and in a way multiply the space. The classicly-inspired design, the luxuriousness of the vegetation, its rich colors provide a certain romanticism which appears clearly researched.<sup>208</sup>

A description of the gardens at Malbosc from 1936-1937 reveals a nearly unaltered landscape from Florence Blumenthal's day:

... an avenue paved with bricks separates flower-beds also bordered by bricks, and connects boxwood and orange trees, to a pavilion of trellises covered with climbing roses. Upper-level terraces dominate the plain of plane trees, and others, smaller, decorate the hill on the side. Two leaning fountains ... are adorned with a high urn, a beautiful design, decorated with stone dolphins & golden reeds made of lead-decorate the facade of the house that overlooks the large decorated terraces...The second high terrace features a game of three fountains that connect a thin canal punctuated by low jets of water in Spanish fashion ... Below is yet another decorated terrace: a central leaning fountain, that collected the waters above, channels direct these to the right and to the left until to the top of the small cascades that descend from terrace to terrace ... Water is constantly here, it is supplied by three sources; we have seen it descend from twelve successive terraces ... it spreads its springing beauty to the prettiest motif in these gardens, to the last terrace, which is like the farewell of these beautiful dreamlike decorations... And finally, in the center of the fountain...dark cypress rise to the sky ...<sup>209</sup>

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Départementales, also list the name of the American expatriate and art collector, James Hazen Hyde.

<sup>208</sup> “*A peine installée, Mme G. Blumenthal conçut le projet grandiose de transformer l'ensemble du domaine... un jardin merveilleux, projet dont elle confia l'exécution à M. Jacques Gréber...Au château de Malbosc...les terrasses majestueusement étagées semblent comme de vastes gradins que la nature et l'art aménagement en lieux de repos et de contemplation, variant en outre les points de vue et l'horizon. Des arbres taillés en figures géométriques se mêlent aux arbres poussés librement. Ici des bassins, des rigoles; là des plates-bandes à dessins d'arabesques offrent des tableaux différents et en quelque sorte multiplient l'espace. Si le dessin est volontiers d'inspiration classique, la luxuriance de la végétation, sa richesse de couleurs donnent à l'aspect général un certain romantisme qui, part endroits, paraît d'ailleurs nettement recherché.*” *Domaine du Château de Malbosc*, p. 10.

<sup>209</sup> “...une allée dallée de briques mène entre des plates-bandes fleuries cernées de briques aussi, & que relie des clous de buis ou des orangers taillés, à un pavillon de treillage couvert de rosiers grimpants. Des terrasses supérieures dominant le terre-plein des platanes, & d'autres, inférieures, habillent la colline de ce côté. Deux fontaines adossées...sont ornées d'une urne

The Blumenthals also dedicated equal time and effort to the renovation of the interior of the house and, again, commissioned Albert-Armand Rateau to decorate the Provençal Château de Malbosc between 1925-1926.<sup>210</sup> Due to the immense size of the house, the Blumenthals did not intend to transform the entire interior, but instead adapt it to their taste.<sup>211</sup> They conserved all of the existing interior moldings and surrounds of the façade and installed new panelling by Rateau.<sup>212</sup> The Blumenthals gave Rateau tremendous freedom to completely re-decorate the private apartments, a commission that he welcomed with passion and enthusiasm since it represented the creation of a total iconographic ensemble. Rateau's designs for the Blumenthals in Grasse ultimately proved to be a tremendous success and exemplified one of his most complete interiors.<sup>213</sup> For Florence's suite of rooms, consistent with the arrangement of her suite at Park Avenue, Rateau created a feminine and intimate boudoir, bedroom, and bathroom with a proliferation of decorative animal motifs, including lighting fixtures, color, and iconography, including all of the modern comforts.<sup>214</sup>

While there are few surviving photographs of the interior of the chateau, Rateau's published designs for both George and Florence's bathrooms proved particularly modern. Photographs of Rateau's hemicycle plan for George Blumenthal's bathroom, likely taken by Rateau after completion and conserved in the private Rateau archives to document his work, illustrate a black, white, and yellow marble floor with undulating shapes (in the

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haute, d'un beau dessin, accostée de dauphins de pierre & de roseaux de plomb doré-décorent la façade de l'habitation qui regarde les grandes terrasses ornées... La second terrasse haute offre un jeu de trois bassins que relie un mince canal rythmé de faibles jets d'eau à la mode espagnole... Au-dessous se trouve encore une terrasse ornée: d'une fontaine centrale, adossée, qui a recueilli les eaux supérieures, des rigoles conduisent celles-ci à droite & à gauche jusqu'à la tête des petites cascades qui vont descendre de terrasse en terrasse... L'eau est constant ici, elle est fournie par trois sources; nous l'avons vue descendre de douze terrasses successives... elle va donner sa beauté jaillissante au plus joli motif de ces jardins, à la dernière terrasse, qui est comme l'adieu de ces beaux décors de rêve... Et enfin, au centre du bassin... sombre des cypress, qui monte aussi vers le ciel..." *La Gazette illustrée des amateurs de jardins*, 1936-1937. (Paris: Société des amateurs de jardins, 1913-1969), pp. 19-20.

<sup>210</sup> *Domaine du Château de Malbosc*, p. 10.

<sup>211</sup> Olivier-Vial and Rateau, p. 132.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, p. 133.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*.

contemporary art deco style) and was decorated with an antique green-colored bathtub with gilded interior above which a gilt-bronze pelican with radiating electrified crystal rods and rock crystal wall lights in the shape of shells were mounted to the wall. It also incorporated an ornamental doorframe decorated with shells and coral branches in stucco, gilt-bronze faucets in the shape of mermaids, gilt-bronze soap holders with glass liners, and oak wall paneling from Hungary, the total conception evoking aquatic elements.<sup>215</sup> (See Fig. 103a-b)

A photo of Florence's bathroom references a Turkish bath, featuring his signature lacquer and oil and water gilded wall decoration depicting palmettes, garlands, fish, and female figures, a large bronze sink with mirror supported by two ostrich heads and faucet handles in the form of birds, a two-tiered marble shelf attached to a bronze stand decorated with leaves to conceal a radiator, a pierced metallic toilet with undulating fabric, and a white marble floor surrounded by a perimeter of black triangles, reminiscent of the bathroom floor motif previously designed by Rateau for Jeanne Lanvin between 1920-1922.<sup>216</sup> (Fig. 104) Rateau also designed each detail of the bathroom, including shelves, towel racks, and wall fixtures that were decorated in gilt-edge plate glass and patinated bronze and impressed with Rateau's name and inventory number.<sup>217</sup> Rateau's exposure to antique decors and mosaics from Pompeian villas and antique sources, as well as influences from Minoan, Greco-Roman, Syrian, and Persian styles undeniably influenced this type of design for decorative wall panels and served as a source of inspiration and individual style of artistic vocabulary which would remain with him throughout his entire career during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 132-140; notes from conversation with Guillaume Féau, April 13, 2016, Paris. According to Guillaume Féau, the best carvers of the period came from Hungary, but work was often incorrectly attributed and can be used to describe the style.

<sup>216</sup> Olivier-Vial and Rateau, pp. 134-135, 140; Olivier-Vial, "Rateau un Baroque chez les Modernes," p. 44.

<sup>217</sup> Rateau inventory, Galerie Anne-Sophie, Paris.

<sup>218</sup> "A byzantine bathroom by Armand-Albert Rateau," Press Release by Galerie Anne-Sophie Duval, Paris (2016), pp. 4; 18; Franck Olivier-Vial, "Rateau un Baroque chez les Modernes," *Estampille*, Number 265 (January 1993), p. 48; Joanna Banham ed., *Encyclopedia of Interior Design* (London; Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), p. 1031.

The Blumenthal's close relationship with Rateau, and the freedom with which they entrusted him to create original, modern interiors in the Art Deco style, proves an interesting juxtaposition to their established collection of Medieval, Renaissance, and eighteenth-century works of art in New York and their construction of a Gothic room in Paris. French designers and decorators, like Rateau, were extremely successful in marketing complete interiors and were reputed to embody the pinnacle of taste. It was common for an elite clientele, like the Blumenthals, to commission entire interiors from French decorators during the 1920's who they were often exposed to at Parisian Expositions, frequently importing them to their native countries.<sup>219</sup> However, the Blumenthals never embraced modern decoration for their principal rooms in their Park Avenue and Malbosc homes, reserving it for predominantly private spaces or for leisure, such as a pool or bathrooms.<sup>220</sup> Nonetheless, the Blumenthals embraced both modern and antique design of the highest quality.<sup>221</sup>

The fact that George Blumenthal was a senior partner of the bank Lazard Frères suggests that the Blumenthals were connected to influential colleagues in both Paris and the south of France during the 1920's, some of whom had substantial art collections, such as American-born French financier and chairman of Lazard in Paris, David David-Weill (1871-1952).<sup>222</sup> David-Weill also served as Vice President of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs in 1923, president of the council of French National Museums between 1931-1940, and Vice President of the Friends of the Louvre, philanthropic organizations that the Blumenthals supported as fellow patrons.<sup>223</sup> In addition to an impressive collection of eighteenth-century French works of art, David-Weill also commissioned furniture from Art Deco craftsmen, such as Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, to use alongside

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<sup>219</sup> Notes from conversation with independent historian Jared Goss, New York, October 5, 2016.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> <http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/qui-sommes-nous/les-arts-decoratifs-depuis-1864/david-david-weill-1871-1952-collectionneur-et-vice-president-de-l-ucad/>

<sup>223</sup> <http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/qui-sommes-nous/les-arts-decoratifs-depuis-1864/david-david-weill-1871-1952-collectionneur-et-vice-president-de-l-ucad/>



his antique pieces.<sup>224</sup> This exposure to the juxtaposition of modern and antique furniture may also have impacted the Blumenthals' collecting during this period.

George and Florence's connection to the region of Grasse must have been quite strong given that in May 1927, George Blumenthal offered the town 750,000 francs to finance the paving of a road measuring six meters wide (later named *Chemin de Blumenthal*, or Blumenthal Way) linking Malbosc and the Moulin de Brun to facilitate automobile traffic.<sup>225</sup> (Fig. 105) In exchange, he requested that the transfer of land be free, the maintenance be shared communally, and that the work be completed by the company Joseph Cresp & Cie. of Grasse under the supervision of engineer M. Aimedieu.<sup>226</sup> Although a generous donation, it has been reported that George Blumenthal sustained a personal interest in the improvement of these local roads as he often traveled to Cannes to gamble in the casinos.<sup>227</sup>

#### Sale of Château de Malbosc

On March 14, 1931, six months after Florence's death, George Blumenthal sold the Malbosc property to American Helena Holbrook "Ella" Walker, HSH Princess della Torre e Tasso (1875-1959), Honorary Citizen of the town of Grasse.<sup>228</sup> Not long after, the property was transformed into the Medical Establishment of the Chateau Malbosc for asthma, respiratory illnesses, and children's allergic diseases until it was sold in 1954 and the property was ultimately divided into individual lots.<sup>229</sup> The *Association Syndicale Libre des Propriétaires de Domaine de Malbosc* (the Malbosc Owners Association) was subsequently established in 1955 and a commercial brochure was printed to advertise the sale of forty-three individual residential lots.<sup>230</sup> Eventually, the chateau and its gardens

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<sup>224</sup> Goss, pp. 190-193.

<sup>225</sup> *La Voix du Peuple*, n. 20 (May 28, 1927), p. 3.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> "Tale of Large Winnings by a New Yorker at Baccarat in the Casino at Cannes, *The New York Times* (March 1, 1929).

<sup>228</sup> *Domaine du Château de Malbosc* (Cannes: Imprimerie Devaye, 1955), p. 10.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Jacques Deuss, former president of the property association (1911-2011), July 3, 2015.

<sup>230</sup> *Dépot du Cahier des Charges du Lotissement et Etablissement de l'Origine de Propriété du Château de Malbosc*, Vol 3439, no. 25, Transcription du 23 mai 1954; *Domaine du Château de Malbosc*, pp. 13-14.

were sold in 1975 to the *Association Départementale des Amis et Parents de Personnes Handicapées Mentales* (Friends and Parent Association of the Mentally Handicapped), renovated in 1977, and converted to a home for the disabled, known today as the Foyer de Malbosc.<sup>231</sup>

None of Rateau's interior decoration for the Blumenthals survives today and was likely dismantled either at the time of the 1931 sale of the chateau, or else during either the 1954 conversion or the 1977 renovation. Because the taste for Art Deco style and decoration was relatively short-lived and went out of fashion soon after its arrival, Rateau's fragile decorative wall panels and interiors produced for Malbosc were likely given away or discarded during the interior renovation of the house as they were no longer considered fashionable.<sup>232</sup>

### Conclusion

Through an in-depth evaluation of the Blumenthals' French residences, we arrived at a clearer understanding of their taste in property and neighborhoods, their personal dedication and involvement in subsequent renovations and commissions, and their preferred circle of architects, decorators, and dealers. The initial rental of Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild's annexed townhouse in the sixteenth district demonstrates an immediate connection to a member of the upper echelon of Parisian society and a sophisticated model of European collecting that likely influenced and complemented the Blumenthal's current taste and aesthetic. The ultimate purchase of property on the Boulevard de Montmorency showcases a tremendous degree of involvement and consideration resulting in the expansion of the property through various acquisitions of additional plots of land and the renovation and construction of new buildings, including a Gothic room used for public engagement, including entertaining, concerts, and Foundation meetings that incorporated period architectural elements and an exceptional organ never before seen in France. Florence's conception and construction of the Gothic room as a meeting space and concert hall facilitated her philanthropic role and create an identity in French society. Her close survey of the planning and construction of this

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<sup>231</sup> Interview with Gerard Chisportich, Director of the Foyer de Malbosc, July 3, 2015.

<sup>232</sup> Notes from interview with historian Jared Goss, New York, October 5, 2016.

space, including petitioning the Historic Monument Commission to retain certain decorative elements, showcases her personal involvement and particular vision, similar to Isabella Stewart Gardner's active participation in the construction of her Fenway Court mansion in Boston, and support of conservation and preservation of national patrimony.

The Blumenthal's final purchase of the Château de Malbosc, near Grasse, while perhaps a predictable Riviera location for American expats during the summer season of the 1920s, again involved a project of expansion, renovation, and enlarged landscaped gardens by Jacques Gréber and contemporary interiors by Armand-Albert Rateau. The Blumenthal's decision to commission Rateau to furnish the interiors in Grasse demonstrates their preference for both antique and modern objects and design. In addition to her collaboration with Rateau to design innovative furniture, Florence Blumenthal's support of contemporary artists through her Foundation, as well as patronage of sculptors like Paul Landowski, again demonstrates a much deeper involvement in the arts than simply a taste for collecting. Even though George and Florence Blumenthal would only enjoy this country retreat for five years before Florence's untimely death, their collaborative dedication and personal involvement was nevertheless equivalent and steadfast.

Building on this clearer understanding of the Blumenthal's residences in both New York and in France, Part 3 will address George and Florence Blumenthal's legacy today through the bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

### Part 3.

#### Collections, Dispersal, and the Blumenthal Legacy at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

This chapter will evaluate the collections, collecting activities, and legacy of George and Florence Blumenthal, following the death of Florence in 1930 and George in 1941, focusing primarily on the bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1941. It will analyze the content of the decorative arts collection as a whole, while evaluating specific case studies in order to demonstrate how typical or atypical the nature of the Blumenthal's collecting practice was, culminating in their ultimate desire for the collection's accessibility to the public. These case studies will also demonstrate the influence that Isabella Stewart Gardner had on the Blumenthal's collecting goals. In addition, this chapter will address areas of the collection that they collected specifically for the Metropolitan Museum and the absorption and display of the Blumenthal collection at the Museum. It will also discuss the representation of the Blumenthal collection in Stella Bloch-Rubenstein's *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal* of 1930, as well as a short analysis of the special exhibition "Masterpieces in the collection of George Blumenthal" held at the Metropolitan Museum in 1943 and the reaction of the public and press. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with the afterlife of the Blumenthal collection through George Blumenthal's second wife, Mary Ann Payne Blumenthal (1889-1973), who ultimately oversaw the final Blumenthal Bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, donated additional objects from George and Florence Blumenthal's collection to the Museum during the 1960s, and surveyed and financially supported the reassembly and reinstallation of the Vélez Blanco Patio in its current location at the Museum.

#### Collection

Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Blumenthal's principal collecting interests included the Italian Renaissance, notably sculpture, bronzes, faience, furniture, and Primitive Italian paintings; Medieval enamel and ivories; French and Flemish tapestries (examples of which they lent to the Metropolitan Museum beginning in 1910 and exhibited in the Decorative Arts Wing); panelling and architectural elements;

books and manuscripts; eighteenth-century French furniture, decorative arts, sculpture and drawings; as well as contemporary design and works of art from the Art Deco period.<sup>1</sup> Based on surviving interior photographs of their Park Avenue residence, the Blumenthals framed these disparate categories by allocating the spaces used for entertaining to the Italian Renaissance and eighteenth-century Venetian style and the private spaces to the eighteenth-century French and Art Deco style.

It has been argued that German Jewish intellectuals were attracted to Renaissance art for its humanist patterns of interpretation and it was often used by German émigrés as a cultural paradigm for the transmission of moral values.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps for Jewish collectors, interest in Renaissance art also enabled them to remain outside the realm of religious discourse and to avoid the anti-Semitic prejudice of the period by retaining a position of neutrality.<sup>3</sup> As discussed later in this chapter, collecting Renaissance art, much of which depicted distinctly religious (i.e. Catholic) subject matter, was perhaps a method of assimilation and acceptance for George Blumenthal in New York society during this period. Since Florence Blumenthal had grown up in a wealthy family and was exposed to artwork and artistic patronage early on, collecting in a variety of genres, like the Renaissance, was perhaps more of a natural extension of her upbringing and may not have served the same purpose as that of her husband. Florence's interest in the arts involved a much a deeper patronage by supporting artists, sponsoring concerts and exhibitions, and ultimately contributing to the penetration of art into the fabric of American life.<sup>4</sup> The act and process of collecting for George and Florence Blumenthal perhaps meant different things to them individually.

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<sup>1</sup> "Last Will and Testament of George Blumenthal," January 9, 1941, George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives, p. 8; J.B., "Two Tapestries Woven by Wilhelm de Pannemaker: A Further Note," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 7 (July 1910), p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Michels, "Art History, German Jewish Identity, and the Emigration of Iconology," in Catherine M. Soussloff ed., *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> Brimo, p. 169.

The influence of several notable collectors may also have influenced the Blumenthals to collect Renaissance art during this period. Beginning in 1894, Isabella Stewart Gardner set the precedent for collecting early Renaissance paintings; in 1906, the Rodolphe Kann collection sale in Paris encouraged other collectors to follow this change in fashion; in 1907, Arabella Huntington began collecting early Renaissance paintings on the advice of dealer Joseph Duveen; and in 1909, Benjamin Altman turned the focus of his collection from seventeenth-century Dutch paintings to early Renaissance paintings.<sup>5</sup> Duveen often encouraged his wealthy clients to purchase Renaissance paintings, suggesting “that its acquisition would considerably enhance the importance of [the collector’s] Italian pictures.”<sup>6</sup> Although the Blumenthals were not frequent clients of Duveen, in comparison to Huntington, dealers Bernard Berenson and Frederick Mason Perkins may have achieved a similar level of influence. (See Part 1 for more information about these dealers)

Individually, these various areas of collecting were not overtly unusual during the first quarter of the twentieth century among American collectors, however it is the juxtaposition and varied interest in the Renaissance, eighteenth, and twentieth centuries that is original for the period and illustrates the Blumenthal’s conscious decision to collect a wide range of art from different cultures and mediums.<sup>7</sup> Given their different cultural and economic backgrounds and identities, George and Florence Blumenthal together developed a strong visual language which allowed them to build a collection of antique and modern art as a couple. An evaluation and analysis of case studies of four categories of collecting will demonstrate the couple’s distinctive range of collecting: the

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<sup>5</sup> Shelley M. Bennett. pp. 192-193.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 193.

<sup>7</sup> In 1909, George Blumenthal lent an early Florentine Renaissance marble bust of the young Saint John by Antonio Rossellino to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a rare loan as few American collectors were interested in Renaissance sculpture. “Recent Loans,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 6 (June 1909), p. 106. For examples of literature on American collecting during this period, see: Brimo; Russell W. Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (London: Routledge, 1994); Frederick Platt, *America’s Gilded Age: Its Architecture and Decoration* (South Brunswick: A. S. Barnes, 1976); and Douglas and Elizabeth Rigby, *Lock, Stock, and Barrel: The Story of Collecting* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1922).

Spanish Patio from Vélez-Blanco; two examples of eighteenth-century French royal furniture; and a collection of European ceramics.

### Vélez Blanco Patio

The Renaissance-style patio, hereinafter referred to as the Spanish Patio, originally formed part of a fortress-like limestone castle situated in the Sierra Maria Mountains on the southeastern coast of Spain that was erected on the foundations of an old Moorish fortress between 1506 and 1515 by Don Pedro Fajardo, first Marquis of Vélez and Governor of Murcia, for his personal use.<sup>8</sup> The castle continued to serve as the seat of the aristocratic Fajardo family, as feudal lords of the region, until the end of the seventeenth century when the family died out, and by the nineteenth century, the grounds were completely abandoned.<sup>9</sup>

The Vélez Blanco castle was one of the earliest structures in Spain to incorporate classical forms, illustrating the transition from Gothic to Renaissance, and is considered by scholars to be a landmark of Spanish architecture.<sup>10</sup> For the Spanish Patio, Don Pedro imported Italian sculptors to carve the sumptuous marble decorations, including capitals, arches, six large window enframements with pilasters, cornices with egg-and-dart and dentil molding, ornate scrolled foliage and friezes, gargoyles, griffins, dragons, sphinxes, and coat of arms all contributing to the main decorative effect.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Olga Raggio, "The Vélez Blanco Patio, An Italian Renaissance Monument from Spain," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (December 1964), p. 142; Patterson, "The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal, p. 63; Amelia Peck, James Parker, William Rieder, Olga Raggio, Mary B. Shepard, Annie-Christine Daskalakis Mathews, Daniëlle O. Kisluk-Grosheide, Wolfram Koeppe, Joan R. Mertens, Alfreda Murck, and Wen C. Fong, *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), p. 49; "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release*, November 22, 1964, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," p. 2; "The Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker* (February 6, 1965), p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3; "The Talk of the Town," p. 24. For more information on the reconstruction of the courtyard's original structure as a result of a newly discovered design drawing from the nineteenth century, see Tommaso Mozzati, "The Patio of Vélez Blanco: A New Drawing and the Courtyard of the Fajardo Castle," *Archivo Espanol de Arte*, vol. XCII, (367), Julio-Septiembre 2019, pp. 261-276.

The magnificent ensemble of arcades, columns, and windows and door enframements, as well as a wooden ceiling and two doors from another salon in the castle were sold in 1904 to the French dealer J. Goldberg and transported to Paris.<sup>12</sup> Following the news of the sale and the export of the marbles, several articles appeared in Spanish newspapers and journals deploring the loss of so important a monument and describing the former aspect of its interiors.<sup>13</sup>

Unpublished documentation pertaining to the transaction of the Spanish Patio reveals that between 1905-1909, Raoul Heilbronner (died 1941), the German-born antiques dealer specializing in Gothic and Renaissance art in Paris, charged the dealer Jacques Seligmann for expenses related to the Patio, including insurance and importation costs.<sup>14</sup> These records suggest that George Blumenthal likely acquired the Patio through Jacques Seligmann via Seligmann's agent, Heilbronner.<sup>15</sup> Previous literature on the history of the Vélez Blanco Patio at the Metropolitan Museum of Art only references the French interior decorator, J. Goldberg in Paris, as the supplier and transporter of the architectural elements from the castle.<sup>16</sup> Although the Heilbronner documents do not reveal from

<sup>12</sup> J. Goldberg was located on the Rue de la Boétie in the eighth district, a recognized street for high-end art dealers in Paris during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For more information, see Anne Sinclair (translated by Shaun Whiteside), *My Grandfather's Gallery: A Family Memoir of Art and War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012); Peck et al, p. 49; Raggio, "The Vélez Blanco Patio, An Italian Renaissance Monument from Spain," p. 142.

<sup>13</sup> Raggio, "The Vélez Blanco Patio, An Italian Renaissance Monument from Spain," p. 143.

<sup>14</sup> Raoul Heilbronner Papers, 1887-1952, MSS25650, Container 5, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>15</sup> Raoul Heilbronner Papers, 1887-1952, MSS25650, Container 5, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Cleland, p. 150.

<sup>16</sup> In 1903, the Parisian dealer, J. Goldberg (rue de la Boétie), purchased ten large relief friezes in sculpted wood, richly carved with the themes of the Triumph of Julius Caesar and the Labors of Hercules, and the coat of arms of Pedro Fajardo and his wife. The friezes were originally part of two groups made between 1510-1515 to decorate the reception halls in the castle from which they were removed at the same time as the patio when the castle was abandoned during the nineteenth century. That same year, Goldberg sold the friezes to the architect/decorator Émile Peyre and subsequently purchased the patio in 1904 from the owners of the derelict castle. Peyre, who amassed a large collection of Medieval art in Paris, donated the friezes to the Louvre in 1905, today the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, which remained stored in unidentified crates since the time of their bequest, only to be rediscovered in storage in 1992 during the museum's renovation. Monique Blanc, "Les Frises Oubliées de Vélez Blanco" (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1999),



whom he acquired the Patio, invoices indicate that Heilbronner purchased the fragments from a J. Goldberg in 1905, suggesting a prior established relationship with the same Goldberg who had purchased the patio in 1904.<sup>17</sup>

Several dealers and collectors during this period with “private museums,” like the Blumenthals, were interested in collecting diverse architectural fragments and the trade in such architectural art was largely oriented towards export from Europe to America, as the sheer scale of some of these works made it difficult to place in local European museums or chateaux.<sup>18</sup> It is very likely that one of the Blumenthals’ principal driving forces behind commissioning the Park Avenue mansion was the acquisition of architectural fragments of the Spanish Patio from Vélez Blanco. Although Blumenthal did not acquire the Patio until 1913, he was surely aware of its existence by 1911 when he invited the architect Goodhue Livingston to Paris to examine and measure the fragments that he was considering acquiring to form the nucleus of the New York residence.<sup>19</sup> W.D. Lillico Builders & Sons also examined the Patio in Paris and assisted with some of the additions of modern pieces where required.<sup>20</sup>

It was not uncommon for collectors during this period to express interest in and gain access to such architectural art, which was often oriented toward export as its large scale made it difficult to place in existing European museums, however, it was less commonly exported to America.<sup>21</sup> Art connoisseurs and collectors, like the Blumenthals, were able to visit the residences of European dealers and decorators abroad that often exhibited

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p. 7; notes from conversation with Monique Blanc, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, September 10, 2014. For more on Goldberg, see Raggio, “The Vélez Blanco Patio, An Italian Renaissance Monument from Spain,” p. 142.

<sup>17</sup> In April 1905, Heilbronner paid J. Goldberg 5700 francs for twelve works of art, primarily wooden sculptures. Raoul Heilbronner Papers, 1887-1952, MSS25650, Container 5, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>18</sup> Paul F. Miller, “‘Handelar’s Black Choir,’ from Château to Mansion,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, vol. 44 (2009), p. 203.

<sup>19</sup> Katherine C. Moore, “Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1,” Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University; George Blumenthal file, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>20</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Miller, “‘Handelar’s Black Choir’ from Château to Mansion, p. 203.

study collections and salvaged elements from demolished castles and abbeys that subsequently may have served as a model of display back home.<sup>22</sup>

It was also during this time that Renaissance architecture became extremely fashionable in the United States, most likely a direct result of the increased supply of architectural fragments and furnishings from abandoned great European houses that began to appear on the art market.<sup>23</sup> The dynamics between wealthy American collectors who saw themselves as the new aristocracy and sought to accumulate objects that reflected the prestige of Old World nobility no doubt helped stimulate the demand for works of art that reflected these tastes and dealers were in search of works of art that fed these collecting trends.<sup>24</sup>

The Spanish Patio was first offered in 1904 to New York collector Archer M. Huntington, founder of the Hispanic Society of America, but after the deal fell through, it was ultimately acquired by George Blumenthal for his Park Avenue residence in 1913.<sup>25</sup> Given Blumenthal's interest in Renaissance sculpture and his expanding art collection, he was presumably attracted to the delicately carved stone of the Spanish Renaissance masterpiece, as well as the concept of a two-storey architectural unit that would form the core display in his soon-to-be completed home on Park Avenue in New York. Prior to its

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<sup>22</sup> In Paris during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, dealers, such as Émile Gavet (1830-1904), Frédéric Spitzer, and Georges Hoentschel (1855-1915), specialized in salvaged architectural material. The townhouse of architect and decorator Émile Peyre, who independently acquired ten friezes previously incorporated into the Spanish Véléz Blanco patio, was located near the Bois de Boulogne and was available for tours. It is possible that George Blumenthal may have seen them on display in Paris before Peyre donated them to the Louvre in 1903. Paul F. Miller, "Handelar's Black Choir' from Château to Mansion, p. 203.

<sup>23</sup> Renaissance-style architecture was also promoted by renowned Gilded Age architects Stanford White and Charles F. McKim in New York. Raggio, "The Véléz Blanco Patio, An Italian Renaissance Monument from Spain," p. 142.

<sup>24</sup> "Gothic Art in The Gilded Age Medieval And Renaissance Treasures," *Antiques and the Arts Weekly* (June 22, 2010), accessed on July 17, 2017; <https://www.antiquesandthearts.com/gothic-art-in-the-gilded-age-medieval-and-renaissance-treasures/>.

<sup>25</sup> It is possible that Goldberg acquired the Spanish Patio with Huntington in mind as the date of their acquisition was the same year as the founding of The Hispanic Society of America. Although George Blumenthal ultimately acquired the Spanish Patio in 1913, he met with the architect Livingston in 1911 in Paris to examine and measure the fragments. Katherine C. Moore, "Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1," Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University; Peck et al, pp. 49-50.

acquisition, both Huntington and Blumenthal were each supplied with a watercolor sketch depicting an ideal reconstruction of the Patio, likely created by the dealer Goldberg, since little documentary evidence of its original appearance prior to its removal from the castle in 1904 survived.<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 106)

The Spanish Patio formed the nucleus around which the principal genres of the Blumenthal collection were displayed in New York. The decorative effect of the marble carvings, including capitals, arches, window enframements, and other architectural details, such as the diverse scrolled foliage, animals, and coat of arms would certainly have enlivened the first and second floors of the house and provided a vertical framework bordering the inner courtyard of the domestic interior.<sup>27</sup> With the assistance of architects Trowbridge & Livingston, the Blumenthals created an inner hall and second floor gallery (combined with some newer stone additions to cover three sides of the room), topped by a coffered ceiling. This created the architectural framework for the display of tapestries on the first floor, underscored by an imposing fifteenth-century marble fountain in the center, as discussed in Part 2A. (See Fig. 53a-b and 55) As Arjun Appadurai argues in *The Social Life of Things, Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, it is the aesthetics of de-contextualization, or placing objects in an unlikely context in a quest for novelty, that is the heart of the display in Western homes.<sup>28</sup>

Following Florence's death in 1930, George Blumenthal decided to cease using electric lighting in the Spanish courtyard in favor of candlelight, and employed three "candlemen" who were in charge of lighting and extinguishing the hundreds of candles used to illuminate the large room.<sup>29</sup> This practice of display is evocative of American sculptor and collector, George Grey Barnard, as previously discussed in Part 2B. The desire to create a rich and atmospheric ambiance was also appreciated by Isabella Stewart Gardner in Boston who lit her Venetian palazzo by candles at night for special visitors

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<sup>26</sup> The watercolor is signed on the lower right corner "m. Goldberg" and dated 1904. Raggio, "The Vélez Blanco Patio, An Italian Renaissance Monument from Spain," p. 143.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>28</sup> Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things, Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Cleland, p. 153.

and privileged guests.<sup>30</sup>

Architectural historian, Bruno Pons, has argued that the reconstitutions of cloisters and the transportation of elements from one place to another was not an accurate reconstruction since the assembly has been created from partial elements inspired by their original arrangement.<sup>31</sup> He also states that “[t]he search for authenticity in decor is therefore a variable concept.”<sup>32</sup> Despite the problematic concept of authenticity, the Blumenthals did not wish to simply recreate the Vélez Blanco courtyard for theatrical or sociability reasons, but understood the larger significance and rare opportunity to acquire, preserve, and reconstruct the extant elements of such a palatial treasure around which to build their new Park Avenue home.

Both George and Florence Blumenthal also had a taste for period room displays in their Park Avenue residence that integrated architectural and decorative elements into an encyclopedic array of historic period style interiors, ranging from Spanish and Italian Renaissance to eighteenth century Italian and French. For example, it has been recently noted that Florence Blumenthal’s third floor sitting room on Park Avenue affirms that “early twentieth century American collectors of French decorative arts...considered their authentic *ancien régime* pieces best set within an overall period styled room.”<sup>33</sup> Thanks to her informative decorating education in Paris with Madame Doucet as discussed in Part 2B, Florence Blumenthal was keenly aware of how both French and American collectors, as well as decorators and dealers, such as Rateau and Seligmann, arranged antiques in an eclectic manner and was able to work her “mélange” of various antique and modern pieces to create an overall period-styled room.<sup>34</sup> She hung small pictures over paneling, combined chairs, daybeds, and screens, and added sculpture on tables and mantle pieces to create her personal style of eclecticism.<sup>35</sup> While a select group of female

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<sup>30</sup> Notes from Dr. Alan Chong’s paper presented at The American Gothic Symposium, The Ringling Museum, Sarasota, Florida, February 26-27, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Bruno Pons, *French Period Rooms 1650-1800; rebuilt in England, France, and the Americas* (Dijon, France: Éditions Fatou, 1995), p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Osborne, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 27, 29, 31.

<sup>35</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

collectors during this period, such as Isabella Stewart Gardner, Arabella Huntington, and Marjorie Merriweather Post successfully demonstrated exposure to diverse and international influences in their homes, it was unusual for a woman, like Florence, to not solely rely on the advice and taste of one dealer or decorator.

Similarly to the installation and decoration of the Spanish Patio and Gothic room, Florence once again likely looked to the taste of Isabella Stewart Gardner who had successfully integrated architectural and decorative elements from her collection into an encyclopedic array of historic period-style interiors displaying the same proclivity for “period rooms.”<sup>36</sup> The Blumenthals likely looked to Gardner once again as a model for the display of a broad array of works of art that cohabitated harmoniously in an atmospheric setting.<sup>37</sup> It was also Gardner’s educational mission to construct a Venetian palace with the purpose of art education through the organization of public exhibitions and display works of art that influenced George and Florence Blumenthal in their own collecting and patrimonial goals.<sup>38</sup> (See more on the Blumenthal’s initial plans to convert their Park Avenue home into a museum later in this chapter) Unlike other contemporary collectors, such as Frick, Morgan, and Walters who constructed sky-lit galleries within to their residences to independently display their collections of paintings and works of art, the Blumenthals, like Gardner, integrated their collection into the framework of their house as a total display without any hierarchies or an isolated viewing space for visitors.

#### Dismantling and Transfer of the Vélez-Blanco Patio

Following George Blumenthal’s ultimate decision to authorize the Metropolitan Museum to tear down his residence and absorb the bequeathed collection following his death in 1941, the dismantling and transfer of nearly two thousand marble blocks from the Spanish patio to the Museum took place in the summer of 1945.<sup>39</sup> (See more information about the dismantling of the Blumenthal residence below) The patio remained in storage for twenty years until a new wing was constructed for its installation as a major part of

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<sup>36</sup> Osborne, pp. 27, 29.

<sup>37</sup> Brimo, p. 190.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179.

<sup>39</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

the Museum's Building Program.<sup>40</sup> In 1955, architect Geoffrey Lawford of the firm Brown, Lawford and Forbes, in collaboration with Director James Rorimer, began studying the inclusion of the Patio as an entrance to the new Thomas J. Watson Library.<sup>41</sup> It was a significant challenge to rebuild the patio as close to the original as possible as little information survived about its original appearance. Therefore, in 1959, Museum curators travelled to the original Spanish site to take precise measurements and photographs.<sup>42</sup> In 1963, the Museum hired Barlow-Meagher Co. to erect the Spanish patio.<sup>43</sup> Following detailed curatorial decision-making, modifications to the patio were made in order to fit the new space in the Museum and reinforcements were made for the security of visitor traffic.<sup>44</sup>

To complete the installation at the Museum, James Rorimer decided to formally de-accession any architectural elements that had been removed from the Vélez Blanco castle that were not originally part of the Patio in exchange for a cast of the Patio's original cornice identified in Spain by Museum staff.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Despite George Blumenthal's desire for the Patio to be permanently incorporated into the Museum building, the Metropolitan Museum retained the right to sell it once it was dismantled or transfer it to another institution, and it was at one time being considered for transfer to the newly constructed National Museum of Fine Arts of Havana, Cuba. In a letter from Sherman Baldwin, a partner of the New York law firm Lord Day & Lord, to Museum secretary, Dudley Easby Jr., Baldwin conveyed his reservation of giving away the Patio as George Blumenthal's Will clearly indicated that he hoped that part of the house could be permanently installed in the Museum building. In 1949, the Board determined that the Patio was not adaptable for exhibition and was approved for de-accession, although overturned in 1951. The individuals governing these decisions involved lawyers, Museum management, architects, and the Board, however ultimately Blumenthal's will was the leading voice. Peck et al, p. 51; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives; "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," p. 1; object file for 41.190.482, European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>41</sup> "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> During the trip to Spain, additional original architectural fragments from the Patio were discovered. The Museum attempted to do an exchange of fragments in preparation for the installation, but the Spanish state was unable to cede them to the Museum, thus casts of certain architectural elements were made to use as models for re-building the Patio. Peck et al, p. 51; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>43</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>44</sup> Peck et al, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

The two-storey, glass-roofed Patio (measuring 53 x 46 feet) was re-erected with funds provided by George and Ann Blumenthal.<sup>46</sup> Ann Blumenthal (then Mrs. Ann Payne Robertson) dedicated the Patio during a formal ceremony held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on April 14, 1964, at which Mayor Wagner presented her with a medallion.<sup>47</sup> The Renaissance Patio opened for public viewing on November 30, 1964.<sup>48</sup> Given Florence Blumenthal's close involvement with the acquisition and installation of the Spanish Patio at the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence, it is curious that the Museum press release announcing the opening of the Patio did not recognize or distinguish her from George Blumenthal's second wife, Ann Blumenthal.<sup>49</sup> Because Florence Blumenthal was not publicly defined in this instance, these two female figures were associated with different roles of constructing the collection: Florence as tastemaker and originator of the collection; Ann as inheritor and "overseer" of the Museum bequest. (Mary Ann Payne Blumenthal will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter)

Overall, the Museum's reinstallation of the Spanish Patio was well received and reviews reported that "[i]ts present form reproduces the patio's original aspect more closely than the Park Avenue adaptation did; for example, the three-sided, arched, colonnaded gallery, or balcony, or loggia, of the Livingston-Blumenthal creation has been replaced by the two-sided balcony of the old Fajardo days."<sup>50</sup> A review of the re-installation in the *New York Times* also emphasized the Metropolitan Museum's additional study of the original site in Spain in an effort to re-install the patio as close to its original condition as possible.<sup>51</sup> Director James Rorimer confirmed that the goal of the reinstallation was to make it more like the original outdoor court by replacing the carved wooden ceiling from

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<sup>46</sup> "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> The medallion was inscribed: "cultural leader, peerless and enthusiastic patron of the arts and dedicated citizen of New York, April 14, 1964." George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives; "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," News for Release, November 22, 1964, p. 1. The press also reported that: "The dedication accomplished varying purposes. It honored Mrs. Ann Payne Robertson, whose late former husband, George Blumenthal, bequeathed the patio to the museum." Sanka Knox, "Patio Dedicated in Museum of Art," *The New York Times* (April 15, 1964).

<sup>48</sup> "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>50</sup> "The Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker* (February 6, 1965), p. 24.

<sup>51</sup> "Spanish Castle On Fifth Avenue," *New York Times* (November 22, 1964), <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/11/22/archives/spanish-castle-on-fifth-avenue.html>.

the Blumenthal installation (part of which was antique, but not from the same site) with a new glass roof.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the Museum's original flat-beamed ceiling (no longer in existence) was replaced with sixteenth-century enameled Sevillian tiles (already in the Museum's collection) that were used to decorate the ceiling of the second floor gallery in the new Patio installation.<sup>53</sup> (Figure 107 illustrates a photo of the initial installation of the patio from 1979)

Additional modifications needed to be made to adapt the patio to the new Museum space, including changing the plan from its original irregular shape to a uniform rectangle, exchanging the architectural elements of the two long sides so that the three tiers of windows could be placed on an existing blank wall, changing the orientation of the stairway, transposing one doorway from the second to the first floor, and adding marble blocks between the two stories to allow for thicker and stronger floors for museum visitors. The orientation of the stairway was also changed and one doorway was transposed from the second to the first floor.<sup>54</sup>

The Museum's attempt to recreate the Patio as close to its original state as possible, while maintaining the appearance of the Blumenthal's installation from their Park Avenue residence, is evident in a letter dated April 1964 from Sherman Baldwin, a partner of the New York law firm Lord Day & Lord, to Museum secretary, Dudley Easby Jr.: "[w]ith respect to other Blumenthal relatives, if at some point Mrs. Eugene Meyer, Mrs. Alfred Cook, Mrs. Louis Loeb and Dr. John Cook could be invited to inspect the patio and could be buttered up a little bit by someone, I think it would be helpful."<sup>55</sup> It is apparent from this letter that an effort to keep Florence Blumenthal's relatives involved in the final reinstallation at the Museum was, on one hand, museological as they could attest to the installation's authenticity, but was perhaps also political so as to keep them involved as potential donors and future Museum patrons.

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<sup>52</sup> "The Talk of the Town," p. 24; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>53</sup> "Patio from Sixteenth Century Spanish Castle Opening at Metropolitan Museum," p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Raggio, "The Vélez Blanco Patio, An Italian Renaissance Monument from Spain," p. 145.

<sup>55</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.



Between 1997-2000, the Metropolitan Museum of Art once again underwent a refurbishment of the Spanish Patio by cleaning the carvings, installing more sophisticated lighting, installing a white, marble floor (after the patio's original paving and taken from the same quarry), and reinstalling the Fajardo coat of arms from underneath the arcade to a more visible position high on the Patio's west wall.<sup>56</sup> The Museum also installed a selection of Spanish Renaissance sculptures and decorative objects from the permanent collection in and around the Patio to illustrate Spanish culture, a part of the collection that had been formerly marginalized, including glass and lusterware, silver, metalwork, and wrought iron.<sup>57</sup> Finally, a grouping of large-scale Italian marble sculpture was placed in the main courtyard, using the Patio as a framework in which to display works of art from the Blumenthal collection and recreating the entry level of their Park Avenue residence.<sup>58</sup> The Museum's re-installation thus represents a shift in the focus of Spanish Renaissance art and recognized both the importance of the Patio's history and its appearance in its prior private display. (See Figs. 108a-c) While the space aims to recreate the courtyard of the Blumenthal's New York home, there is no reference to the collectors themselves in the installation, perhaps underscoring why the couple has been overlooked today.

#### Suite of Eighteenth-Century French Royal Furniture

In 1923, George and Florence Blumenthal purchased a suite of three pieces of carved and gilded French furniture, including a daybed, armchair, and fire screen, made around 1788 by the *menuisier*, or joiner, Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, for Queen Marie-Antoinette's Cabinet de Toilette (dressing room) at the summer residence of the chateau of Saint-Cloud.<sup>59</sup> (See Figs. 109a-c) Following renovations to the building after Louis XVI acquired the residence for the Queen from the duc d'Orléans, the furniture was ordered to

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<sup>56</sup> Grace Glueck, "Art Review; A Palatial Patio's Fresh Air," *The New York Times* (May 12, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> "Vélez Blanco Patio Reopens May 12 at Metropolitan Museum After Three-Year Renovation," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release* (April 13, 2000), [www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2000/vélez-blanco-patio-reopens-may-12-at-metropolitan-museum-after-threeyear-renovation](http://www.metmuseum.org/press/news/2000/vélez-blanco-patio-reopens-may-12-at-metropolitan-museum-after-threeyear-renovation). (accessed August 4, 2017)

<sup>59</sup> Object file for 41.205.1, 41.205.2, 41.205.3a,b, European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

size so that it could be covered with white cotton twill, embroidered with a small floral ornament in silk reputed to have been made by Marie-Antoinette herself.<sup>60</sup> Since the suite bears no nineteenth century inventory marks, it is commonly believed that it figured in the Revolutionary sales at Saint-Cloud in 1794 or 1795 (although there is no record) and was subsequently acquired by the Marquis de Casaux, remaining in the family until it was sold at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris on December 21, 1923 (attributed to the cabinetmaker Georges Jacob) to George and Florence Blumenthal for 158,000 francs, a relatively high price at the time.<sup>61</sup>

By the time of the Drouot auction, the Blumenthals were already spending increasing amount of time in Paris, having acquired the residence on the Boulevard Montmorency in 1920, and may have likely attended the auction themselves. It has also been suggested that a dealer purchased the suite of furniture at the Drouot sale and recovered the furniture with modern floral polychrome brocade silk in order to achieve a high price from George Blumenthal.<sup>62</sup> First-hand accounts of the furniture in use, (see more information below), and surviving photographs of Florence Blumenthal's sitting room in the Park Avenue residence (before her death) illustrating the suite covered in deep purple upholstery, one can assume that the suite of furniture was therefore shipped back to New York after its acquisition in Paris.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Alden Watson, "J.B.C. Sené's Suite for Marie-Antoinette's Cabinet de Toilette at Saint-Cloud," Qualifying Paper in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Arts from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (March 15, 1981), p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> The suite of royal furniture was previously offered for sale for the exorbitant reserve price of 1m francs at Hôtel Drouot in Paris on June 2, 1911, listed as "*Trois Meubles Louis XVI*," but remained unsold until June 17 when the suite was sold to an unknown buyer (possibly a dealer or agent for the Marquis de Casaux who was buying back his own lot) for only 135,000 francs. Watson, pp. 7-8; Pierre Verlet, *French Royal Furniture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), p. 183.

<sup>62</sup> When the three pieces of furniture were given to the Metropolitan Museum in 1943, only the original embroidered show cover from the fire screen survived. Modern replicas of the queen's handiwork, including her interlaced monogram on the panel of the fire screen, were ordered more recently by the Museum, using the original embroidered panel of the fire screen as a guide. Wendy Moonan, "The Queen's Stitches, Re-creating Needlework by Marie Antoinette at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *ArchitecturalDigest.com* (May 2008), p. 137; Verlet, p. 185; Osborne, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup> See George Blumenthal, "The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York"; MMA Archives B6273. Blumenthal, George. James R. Rorimer, Untitled document, May 11, 1965, 2; Osborne, p. 28.

It was likely Florence Blumenthal who took the lead in decorating the private rooms on the third floor of the Blumenthal's New York residence that were furnished in a lighter, French mid-eighteenth-century style. (See Part 2A for more information on the interior decoration of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence) Florence's suite of rooms comprised a bedroom, dressing room, and sitting room, all furnished with French eighteenth-century furniture, porcelain, sculpture, and lighting combined with nineteenth and twentieth-century objects and paneling in the eighteenth-century style. Her placement of the suite of Sené furniture in the intimate sitting room is consistent with its original function in the eighteenth century when it decorated Marie Antoinette's private boudoir at Saint-Cloud where she would have entertained members of her closest circle.<sup>64</sup>

Florence also used her sitting room to receive close acquaintances and guests who would have presumably remarked on (or would have been told about) the royal furnishings. The role of furniture not only stimulated and encouraged conversation, but also added prestige. Former Metropolitan Museum curator and director, James R. Rorimer, who was actively involved in the integration of the Blumenthal's architectural elements from their Gothic room in Paris into the structure of the Cloisters, vividly re-counted "lounging on Marie Antoinette's furniture in Mrs. B's parlour" in their New York home.<sup>65</sup> One's social interaction with such pieces of French furniture directly corresponds to Mimi Hellman's themes on the role of furniture as social actors that en- or discourage certain modes of behaviour from whoever interacts with them, and therefore leads to the formation of specific manners.<sup>66</sup> These encounters of bodily conduct in the eighteenth century are re-enacted and re-applied to the attitude and practices between people and objects in a twentieth century context.

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<sup>64</sup> Osborne, p. 29.

<sup>65</sup> "Blumenthal, George. James R. Rorimer, Untitled document, May 11, 1965, 2," George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>66</sup> See Mimi Hellman, "Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth Century France," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1999), pp. 415 – 445; Luisa Coscarelli, "Subverting Gender Hierarchies and the 'Work of Leisure'? A French Eighteenth-Century Work Table," <http://unmakingthings.rca.ac.uk/2014/subverting-gender-hierarchies-and-the-work-of-leisure-a-french-eighteenth-century-work-table/>. (accessed: July 18, 2017)

The phenomenon and fetishization of furniture associated with Queen Marie Antoinette was prevalent during this period and there has been much scholarship to date on collectors drawn to pieces with French royal provenance, specifically self-made millionaires buying aristocratic heritage as a symbol of noble status that they could not obtain themselves.<sup>67</sup> It was common for high society American doyennes to be infatuated with the French Queen, even dressing up like her.<sup>68</sup> Heiress and collector Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887-1973), founder of Hillwood Estate, Museum, and Gardens in Washington D.C., was especially taken with Marie Antoinette, channeling her imperiously glamorous style for two fancy dress balls in Palm Beach during the 1920s and fashioning her bedroom in the mid-1950s with neoclassical French furniture and a pink canopied bed, reminiscent to Florence Blumenthal's bedroom decoration on Park Avenue.<sup>69</sup> (See Fig. 65b) While Post's bedroom at Hillwood was decorated in the mid-1950s, more than thirty years after Florence's suite on Park Avenue, Post purchased the Burden mansion on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 92<sup>nd</sup> Street in New York in 1916 and began collecting French decorative arts at the same time that Blumenthals were decorating their new home nearby.<sup>70</sup>

Works of art from the eighteenth century had become very fashionable by the middle of the nineteenth century, continuing well into the early twentieth century, and royal provenance often added economic value to particular works of art, even when the connections were tenuous. While the zeal for eighteenth-century taste and style was certainly embraced throughout Paris' high society, beginning with Empress Eugénie of

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<sup>67</sup> One particularly severe review of the Blumenthal's collection of decorative arts and sculpture (subsequently displayed in an exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1943) attributed a part of George Blumenthal's collecting motivations to exclusively royal associations and provenance instead of a concern for craftsmanship. "The Art Galleries, More about Collectors," *The New Yorker* (December 18, 1943); Osborne, pp. 32-33.

<sup>68</sup> Stephanie Green, "Spotlight: Marjorie Merriweather Post's Cartier Collection," Capitol File Magazine online: <https://capitolfile-magazine.com/what-you-need-to-know-about-marjorie-merriweather-posts-cartier-collection-at-hillwood-estate-museum-and-gardens>. (accessed September 15, 2017)

<sup>69</sup> Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Archives; Stephanie Green, "Spotlight: Marjorie Merriweather Post's Cartier Collection," Capitol File Magazine online: <https://capitolfile-magazine.com/what-you-need-to-know-about-marjorie-merriweather-posts-cartier-collection-at-hillwood-estate-museum-and-gardens> (accessed September 15, 2017).

<sup>70</sup> Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Archives.

France (1826-1920), who collected anything related to Marie-Antoinette and made the late Queen and her French neoclassical style fashionable again during the second half of the nineteenth century, the devotion to the most decadent era of France's aristocracy was most typical amongst the newly wealthy classes (both Jewish and non) both in France and abroad.<sup>71</sup>

Examples of nineteenth and twentieth-century non-Jewish collectors, including Sir Richard Wallace (1818-1890) in London and Paris, Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) in New York, Henry E. Huntington (1850-1927) in Los Angeles, and Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887-1973) in Washington, D.C. were all admirers of French eighteenth century decorative arts and sought after furniture and works of art produced by the most talented craftsmen commissioned by the French court, thus focusing primarily on quality and provenance.<sup>72</sup> Newly wealthy Jewish aristocrats, such as the Camondo and Rothschild families, may have also regarded and employed this area of collecting as means of assimilation and display of appreciation for French culture.

Those newly wealthy Gilded Age collectors, both Jewish and non, who focused on provenance of their objects were often criticized as being inexperienced who "resorted to words as compensation, and even as substitution, for understanding and engagement."<sup>73</sup> Certainly by the time the Blumenthal collection arrived at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, following George Blumenthal's death, there was an impression that collectors, such as J.P. Morgan and George Blumenthal, had a tendency to confuse the value of a work of art as art purely based on its association, either provenance or royal subject matter.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> James Mcauley, "A Secret Paris Museum and an Aristocratic Family Decimated by the Holocaust," *Town & Country Magazine* (February 9, 2017), <http://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/a9474/camondo-museum-paris/>. (accessed May 23, 2017); Brimo, pp. 210-213.

<sup>72</sup> For more information, see Robert R. Wark, *French Decorative Arts in the Huntington Collection* (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1979); Charlotte Vignon, *The Frick Collection: Decorative Arts Handbook* (New York: The Frick Collection in association with Scala Publishers, Inc., 2015); and Rosalind Savill, *The Wallace Collection: Catalogue of Sèvres Porcelain* (London: Trustees of the Wallace collection, 1988).

<sup>73</sup> Arnold Lewis, James Turner, and Steven McQuillin, *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1987), p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> "The Art Galleries, More about Collectors," *The New Yorker* (December 18, 1943).

However, George Blumenthal has also been described as a skeptic in regards to the value of one's object based purely on its provenance and believed it was often a dissuading factor when considering an acquisition, as curator of Renaissance and modern art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Preston Remington, recounted:

Wartime stringencies in England brought on the market a large marble sculpture of Samson and a Philistine by the Renaissance sculptor Giovanni Bologna. It was a piece that Preston Remington...very much wanted for the Metropolitan Museum. Francis Henry Taylor, director of the museum, arranged a gourmet's lunch for George Blumenthal, the sybaritic banker-collector, who was president of the Metropolitan. After lunch, the three gentlemen retired to Taylor's office. The shy, flustered curator rose to make his presentation while the well-fed Mr. Blumenthal closed his eyes and sat like a sleeping turtle. Remington had never been on such secure ground. Never had there been so impeccable a pedigree. His courage mounted as he made his pitch... 'Nope,' said Blumenthal, hardly stirring, 'we don't want it.'... 'But, Mr. Blumenthal,' the flabbergasted curator continued, 'this is a great work of art and its provenance is exceptional.' 'It can't be any good,' said Blumenthal imperturbably... 'Too many people have given it away.'<sup>75</sup>

Yet there were some newly wealthy collectors, such as Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898), creator of Waddesdon Manor (1874-1889), who considered that he and his wealthy peers played a role in the progression of a liberal democracy by acquiring works of art made for monarchs and prelates and assembling them as new collections in their homes before their inevitable transition to the people in the form of museums.<sup>76</sup> Rothschild's sense of the educative potential of museums and his intention to present his collection to the public was also influenced by the gifts of other nineteenth century collections, including the Wallace Collection and that of the Duc d'Aumale.<sup>77</sup> In a rare memoir of collecting from 1897, Ferdinand de Rothschild advocated the public accessibility of private collections:

Collectors may deplore the fact but it should be a source of gratification to the public, that most fine works of art drift slowly but surely into museums

<sup>75</sup> Saarinen, pp. 89-90.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Hall, "Bric-à-Brac: A Rothchild's Memoir of Collecting," *Apollo* (166), no. 545 (July and August, 2007), pp. 50-77. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Bric-a-Brac%3A+a+Rothchild%27s+memoir+of+collecting%3A+in+1897+the+creator...-a0166750878>.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

and public galleries. In private hands they can afford delight only to a small number of persons. Take even the case of our large country houses whose proprietors generously allow them to be visited on certain days. These are accessible to a limited circle. Moreover, they run the risk of fire or other damage.<sup>78</sup>

Despite Rothschild's belief in democracy and his advocacy of civic-minded collectors to share their collections with the public, first-hand accounts describing the over-the-top lifestyle at Waddesdon Manor were observed and often criticized. One guest staying at Waddesdon remarked:

...I admire the host, he does things so very well...When lying abed in the morning it gives me satisfaction when a lacquey softly enters the room and asks whether I will take tea, coffee, chocolate or cocoa. This privilege is accorded to me in the houses of all my distinguished friends: but it is only at Waddesdon that on saying I prefer tea, the valet further enquires whether I fancy Ceylon, Souchong or Assam.<sup>79</sup>

Novelist, Henry James, wrote following his stay at Waddesdon in 1885, "the gilded bondage of that gorgeous place will last me for a long time."<sup>80</sup> Other distinguished guests at Waddesdon, such as David Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, observed Rothschild's material values by recounting:

I failed to gather that his priceless pictures give him true pleasure. His clock for which he gave £25,000, his escritoire for which £30,000 was paid, his statuary, his china, and his superb collection of jewels, enamels and so forth ('gimcracks' he calls them)-all these things give him meager satisfaction: and I felt that the only pleasure he derives from them is gained when showing them to his friends. Even then one sees how bitterly he resents comment which is ignorant or inept.<sup>81</sup>

In the twentieth century, similar criticisms of the extreme material luxuries of newly wealthy Jewish collectors provides a clear picture of the harsh criticisms in response to their tendency to over do it, often in an effort to assimilate. After dining at the Berlin

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Michael Hall, *Waddesdon Manor: The Heritage of a Rothschild House* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), p. 160.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Hall, *Waddesdon Manor: The Heritage of a Rothschild House*, p. 160.

residence of art collector and socialite, Marie-Anne “Baby” von Goldschmidt-Rothschild in 1929, German aristocrat, Count Harry Kessler, recorded in his diary:

Dinner at Baby Goldschmidt-Rothschild’s in the Pariser Platz. Eight to ten people, intimate party, extreme luxury. Four priceless masterpieces by Manet, Cezanne, Van Gogh, and Monet respectively on the walls. After the meal thirty Van Gogh letters, in an excessively ornate, ugly binding, were handed around with cigarettes and coffee. Poor Van Gogh! I feel like instituting a pogrom. These people should be slaughtered. Not out of jealousy, but disgust at the falsification and degradation of intellectual and artistic values to mere baubles, ‘luxurious’ possessions.<sup>82</sup>

This particular rereference, while especially aggressive and rather shocking, is similar to André de Fouquières criticism of the Blumenthal’s artificial creation of the Gothic room in Paris and their “American taste.” (See Part 2B, page 158) There were also some who disagreed more openly with the sale of works of art and furniture once belonging to aristocratic and royal families to those with such foreign, diverse, and Jewish origins.<sup>83</sup> Beginning in the Middle Ages, Jews and other minorities were restricted by sumptuary laws that governed their dress and appearance, as well as restricted their expenditures and conspicuous consumption. These restrictions and discrimination remained in the forefront of people’s minds well into the nineteenth century.<sup>84</sup> Following the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair in France, anti-Semites during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often attacked elite Jewish collectors for somehow “invading” France’s cultural heritage, for buying houses and objects with aristocratic pedigree that they, as foreigners, had no business owning.<sup>85</sup> Although early twentieth-century collectors in both New York and Paris associated Louis XVI interiors with culture and French aristocracy, the Blumenthals reserved the implementation of this style of decoration to only private and intimate spaces of their New York residence, perhaps as a result of their interpretation of

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<sup>82</sup> Charles Kessler ed., *Berlin in Lights, The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937)* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), p. 374.

<sup>83</sup> McAuley, “A Secret Paris Museum and an Aristocratic Family Decimated by the Holocaust.”

<sup>84</sup> Notes from Mimi Schmidt’s paper “Sommerfrische, Connoisseurship, Scandal and the Temporary in the Jewish Country House in Austria: Baron Nathaniel Rothschild’s castle in Reichenau and Dr. Josef Kranz’ Villa Raach,” Jewish Country House conference, The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, Oxford University, March 5, 2018, <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/sommerfrische-connoisseurship-scandal-and-temporary-jewish-country-house-austria-baron>.

<sup>85</sup> McAuley, “A Secret Paris Museum and an Aristocratic Family Decimated by the Holocaust.”



the appropriate space for which they felt the style was best suited. Florence was no doubt attracted to the delicate carving of the three pieces of Louis XVI furniture, as well as the illustrious provenance and the remarkable association with Marie Antoinette's embroidery, however the royal furniture was intended to be used and Florence clearly lived among her treasures.<sup>86</sup>

The Blumenthal's acquisition of Marie Antoinette's furniture from Saint-Cloud could be seen as emulating earlier collectors, like the Rothschilds in England and France or Moïse de Camondo in Paris, who surrounded themselves with royal furniture to create the aristocratic European heritage that they lacked. However, while Blumenthals did acquire works of art with aristocratic connotations, the issue of anti-Semitic prejudice does not appear to be a factor in Florence's collecting choices. Instead, their motivation focused on elevating national taste in America through art and preserving their house and collection for posterity in the context of a public museum.<sup>87</sup> (See more on the Blumenthal's concept for a public museum later in this chapter)

#### Mechanical desk by Jean-Henri Riesener

The mechanical desk made by the German cabinetmaker, Jean Henri Riesener (1734-1806), for Queen Marie Antoinette of France is one of the more significant French royal provenances among the eighteenth-century furniture and one of two Riesener mechanical tables in the Blumenthal collection. It is presumed that both pieces of furniture decorated the Blumenthal's Parisian residence on the Boulevard de Montmorency since they were later sold at auction in Paris in 1932.<sup>88</sup> (See Fig. 110) The larger multipurpose table was delivered to Versailles in 1778, just before the birth of the Queen's first child, to be used for various activities, either seated or standing, such as eating, writing, reading, and

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<sup>86</sup> Seligman, p. 143.

<sup>87</sup> George Blumenthal ultimately sold the collection of eighteenth-century works of art at auction in Paris in 1932, but had hoped that the New York house (complete the Sené furniture suite) would remain open as a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Osborne, pp. 33-34.

<sup>88</sup> See "Collection de M. Blumenthal," Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, December 1-2, 1932, lots 169 and 170. The Riesener mechanical table (lot 169) is conserved today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (inv. 33.12) and the smaller table (lot 170) has remained in private hands and will recently be sold at auction at Christie's London, "The Collector: European and English Furniture, Ceramics, Portrait Miniatures & Works of Art," lot 14.

dressing, as the central panel of the top can be lifted to form a lectern and a mirror on the reverse. A detachable crank at one side allowed the top to be raised or lowered on ratcheted metal shafts that move up or down in the hollow legs. Buttons along the front edge of the table release hinged lids to six compartments for the storage of cosmetic and writing utensils.<sup>89</sup>

The table was most likely sold during the French Revolutionary sales and exported to England, as was the case for many other pieces of French royal furniture during this period, although its whereabouts during most of the nineteenth century are unknown. It was eventually acquired by Charles Maurice Camille de Talleyrand-Périgord, Duke of Dino (1843-1917), followed by Walter Burns of London, and Viscountess Harcourt (née Mary Ethel Burns and niece of J. Pierpont Morgan) of London, until it was ultimately purchased by George and Florence Blumenthal in Paris sometime before the publication of the Blumenthal collection catalogue in 1930.<sup>90</sup> Following Florence's death, the table was featured in the Blumenthal Collection sale at Galerie Georges Petit in Paris on December 1–2, 1932 (lot 168) and received a great deal of interest from important clients and bidders. As a result, George Blumenthal asked the auctioneer Ader to raise the estimate from 300,000 to 650,000 francs and even attempted to re-acquire the table by submitting a maximum bid of 650,000 francs.<sup>91</sup> With such a keen interest in keeping the desk, perhaps due to its historical significance or its close association with Florence, it is curious why George Blumenthal agreed to sell it in the first place. As a businessman at heart, he likely would have only agreed to part with it for a large sum or profit. Figure 111 illustrates the Blumenthal sales results in the *Gazette de l'Hôtel Drouot*, featuring the Riesener mechanical table that sold for 605,000 francs.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/197339>.

<sup>90</sup> <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/197339>;  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis\\_Harcourt,\\_1st\\_Viscount\\_Harcourt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Harcourt,_1st_Viscount_Harcourt)

<sup>91</sup> D43E3 125, Archives de Paris; "Collection De M. George Blumenthal," Galerie Georges-Petit, Paris (December 1-2, 1932), lot 168.

<sup>92</sup> D43E3 125, Archives de Paris.

George Blumenthal also designated permission to the dealer Jacques Seligmann to bid on twenty-one lots for him at the sale.<sup>93</sup> (See Part 2B for more information on the auction) The importance of the table is corroborated by the fact that the desk was ultimately acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, preceding the Blumenthal Bequest that would come to the Museum less than a decade later.<sup>94</sup>

The exportation of French royal furniture to England and America during the French Revolutionary sales resulted in the formation of several important collections of French furniture abroad and was often identified as hallmarks of America's Gilded Age. The earliest American collectors of French furniture were Thomas Jefferson, who sent home eighty-six crates of furniture and decorative arts to his Monticello estate in 1789, as well as Boston financier, James Swan, who imported an important suite of French royal furniture in 1794.<sup>95</sup> In the nineteenth century, the Vanderbilts, Collis P. and Arabella Huntington, and William and Caroline Astor were among the earliest collectors to amass great collections of eighteenth-century French decorative arts in New York and Newport, Rhode Island.<sup>96</sup> In the early twentieth century, industrialist and collectors like Andrew Carnegie, J. Pierpont Morgan, Henry Clay Frick, Henry E. Huntington, and John D. Rockefeller continued the tradition.<sup>97</sup>

Riesener furniture, in particular, became highly collectable during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it was perhaps the model of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in England, who collected the most important single group of works by Riesener during

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/197339>

<sup>95</sup> Wendy Moonan, "Let Them Sit on Chaises," *The New York Times* [online] (October 11, 2002), <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/11/arts/antiques.html>, (accessed June 2, 2018).

<sup>96</sup> "From Medici to Bourbon: The Formulation of Taste and the Evolution of the Vanderbilt Style," <https://www.newportmansions.org/documents/learn/research%20papers/americas-%20medici.pdf> (accessed June 2, 2018).

<sup>97</sup> Moonan, "Let Them Sit on Chaises;" "From Medici to Bourbon: The Formulation of Taste and the Evolution of the Vanderbilt Style," <https://www.newportmansions.org/documents/learn/research%20papers/americas-%20medici.pdf>. (accessed June 2, 2018)

the last three decades of the nineteenth century for his residence at Waddesdon Manor.<sup>98</sup> It is possible that George and Florence may have seen the Rothschild collection displayed at the British Museum in 1898, the year of the Waddesdon Bequest and the Blumenthal's honeymoon overseas.<sup>99</sup> Although George and Florence Blumenthal did not collect a large grouping of French royal furniture, their acquisition of the Sené suite and the Riesener table in Paris follows the similar trend of collecting royal French furniture during this period.

### Collection of Ceramics

George and Florence Blumenthal collected a range of porcelains in both their New York and Paris residences. Their collecting interest principally centered around Italian maiolica (tin-glazed earthenware), many of which were included in the 1941 Blumenthal bequest to the Metropolitan Museum, as well as French, German, and Asian-mounted porcelains.<sup>100</sup> The importance of provenance played a key role in many of the aspects of the Blumenthal's collecting, including maiolica. A list compiled by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, following the Blumenthal Bequest in 1941, records the private collections cited on the labels of the objects, illustrating that the majority of them came from well-known collectors and aristocratic collections. This implies that the couple started collecting by buying from larger collections and building on them.<sup>101</sup> While this area of collecting was part of the fashionable taste of the period and was consistent with other contemporary collectors, the Blumenthal's interest in ceramics reflects not only a

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<sup>98</sup> In addition to Riesener furniture, Ferdinand de Rothschild also amassed an important collection of Renaissance objects that he often referred to as his "Renaissance Museum." Katy Barrett, "In praise of the Waddesdon Bequest," *Apollo Magazine* [online] (May 15, 2015), <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/in-praise-of-the-waddesdon-bequest/>; <http://www.christies.com/about-us/press-archive/details?PressReleaseID=7506&lid=1>; <https://waddesdon.org.uk/whats-on/spencer-house-lecture-furniture-gilded-age-dr-ulrich-leben/>

<sup>99</sup> Although the Blumenthals do not figure among those listed in the visitor's book at Waddesdon Manor, their collecting interests may nonetheless have been enhanced by Ferdinand de Rothschild's Renaissance collection, originally displayed in his Smoking Room, and often referred to as a "Renaissance Museum." Katy Barrett, "In praise of the Waddesdon Bequest," *Apollo Magazine* [online] (May 15, 2015), <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/in-praise-of-the-waddesdon-bequest/>; email correspondence with Mia Jackson, Curator of Decorative Arts at Waddesdon Manor, November 16, 2017.

<sup>100</sup> Wilson, p. 43.

<sup>101</sup> News Clippings and Ephemera Collection, MMA Archives, Box 41 "Exhibitions: Press Clippings, 1943-44," Folder 2, Blumenthal Collection, 1943.

concern for an objects' illustrious provenance, but also in the origins and cross-cultural influences of ceramics.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Italian Renaissance maiolica became increasingly popular among collectors and museums in Britain and America, and some of the most prominent collectors included Ferdinand de Rothschild and J.P. Morgan in England and Alva Vanderbilt and John Ringling in the United States.<sup>102</sup> The fact that George Blumenthal was an active member of the board and knew Morgan, it is extremely likely that he and Florence attended the momentous loan exhibition of Morgan's collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York between 1914-1916, and may have been influenced by the display of Italian Renaissance ceramics that was reputed to be "one of the finest in private possession."<sup>103</sup>

The Blumenthals began collecting Renaissance maiolica during a period when the market was strong, prices were high, and the taste for art forms with elaborate surface decoration was prominent, however, prices began to fall in the early 1930s continuing until World War II.<sup>104</sup> The couple predominantly acquired ceramics at auction from the collections of other prominent collectors, including J.P. Morgan and Baron Adolphe de Rothschild, as well as from the stock of Joseph Duveen.<sup>105</sup> (See Figs. 112a-b and 113)

Florence Blumenthal played a central role in the acquisition of Italian maiolica and was not afraid to spend large sums of money. In 1919, she paid the extraordinary sum of

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<sup>102</sup> <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/a-z-of-ceramics>; Virginia Brilliant, *Gothic Art in the Gilded Age: Medieval and Renaissance Treasures in the Gavet-Vanderbilt-Ringling Collection* (Sarasota, Florida: John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art; Newport, R.I.: Preservation Society of Newport County; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: distributed by Gutenberg Periscope Publishing, 2009).

<sup>103</sup> *Guide to the Loan Exhibition of the J. Pierpont Morgan Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1914), p. 51; Wilson, p. 42. The loan exhibition marked the passing of the collection from J.P. Morgan to his son, J.P. Morgan Jr.

<sup>104</sup> Wilson, p. 43.

<sup>105</sup> The dealer Joseph Duveen brought the collection of Adolphe de Rothschild from Paris to America in 1914 and bought from the Morgan estate in 1916. Other pieces of maiolica purchased by the Blumenthals were previously in the collections of banker Sigismond Bardac in Paris and John. E. Taylor in London. Wilson, p. 44; see *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal*, vol. 3 (Paris: Priv. print., A. Lévy, 1926-1930).

\$100,000 for five pieces of lusterware from the Morgan and Rothschild collections, however later returned the Rothschild pieces to Duveen.<sup>106</sup> She also purchased a select group of maiolica from Duveen Brothers in New York, including a pair of wide-rimmed bowls depicting *istoriato* painting from Virgil's Aeneid, one previously in Morgan's collection, the other from the collection of Adolphe de Rothschild in Paris.<sup>107</sup> (See Fig. 114a-b) Likely originally part of the same set, the bowls are among the most accomplished of all Italian lusterware.<sup>108</sup> A pair of large oval basins, made in Urbino, from the Blumenthal collection were previously in the Spanish Royal Collections and subsequently in the collection of Sir Anthony Rothschild in London.<sup>109</sup> (See Figs. 115a-b)

The Blumenthals featured a prominent display of Italian Renaissance maiolica in their New York residence, primarily utilitarian and decorative objects, such as pharmacy jars for storage (known as *albarello*), again using the Spanish patio as a vehicle for the presentation of works of art. (See Fig. 60) Figure 116a-b illustrates a pair of painted armorial roundels (*tondi*) made by the School of Giovanni della Robbia predominantly displayed on the wall on the second floor terrace. The pairing and arrangement of Italian maiolica ceramics in New York reflect the Blumenthal's interest in the overall display of the ceramics as a cumulative group, rather than the value and historical importance of each individual piece.<sup>110</sup> They also grouped similar, rather than identical pieces, to evoke the impression of a larger series.<sup>111</sup>

In addition, the Blumenthals collected a variety of eighteenth-century European and Asian-mounted porcelains, as well as lacquer ware and rock crystal, many of which feature prominently in the Blumenthal sale at the George Petit Galerie in 1932 and must

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<sup>106</sup> Charlotte Vignon, *Duveen Brothers and the Market for Decorative Arts, 1880-1940* (New York: The Frick Collection in Association with D Giles Limited, 2019), pp. 236-237; 278.

<sup>107</sup> Wilson, pp. 230-233.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/198945>;  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/198946>

<sup>110</sup> Wilson, p. 71.

<sup>111</sup> Wilson, p. 71.

have been displayed in their Paris residence.<sup>112</sup> Similar to their collection of Italian Renaissance maiolica, the Blumenthals purchased these eighteenth-century works from established aristocratic collectors, such as Paul Dutasta, Baron Albert Oppenheim, J.P. Morgan, and John Jones.<sup>113</sup> Close friend and dealer, Jacques Seligmann, often bought such pieces from important collector sales, like Oppenheim, and quickly sold them to new wealthy collectors, including Morgan and Blumenthal.<sup>114</sup> It is interesting to note that the world of collecting during this period was highly interconnected. Newly wealthy collectors often sought out works of art from the same collections with notable provenance and a small group of influential dealers, like Duveen and Seligmann, were supplying these works of art to the same network of clients.

Catalogue of the “Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal,” compiled by Stella Rubinstein-Bloch (Paris: Priv. print., A. Lévy, 1926-30)

The Blumenthals were not the first and only collectors to publish a set of illustrated books presenting their collection. Francis Haskell noted that the first lavishly illustrated collection catalogues appeared in Italy during the seventeenth century and “intended to glorify the owners at least as much as the works depicted.”<sup>115</sup> The incentive to produce illustrated collection catalogues increased during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

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<sup>112</sup> Select pieces of European ceramics, previously in the Blumenthal collection, have recently reappeared on the art market, including a pair of Meissen porcelain figures (after a model by Peter Reinicke), depicting a Chinese man and woman mounted in gilt-bronze, dated about 1760. This pair of mounted Meissen figures was purchased by the Blumenthals in 1926 in Paris at the sale of the French Ambassador to Switzerland, Paul Dutasta (1873-1925). See “Collection de M. George Blumenthal,” Galerie Georges-Petit, Paris (December 1-2, 1932), lot 83. The figures were recently purchased by French dealer Christophe De Quenetaïn and are in a private collection today. See “Old Master Paintings, Furniture and Works of Art,” Piasa, Paris (June 18, 2015), lot 276.

<sup>113</sup> See *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal*, vol. 3 (Paris: Priv. print., A. Lévy, 1926-30).

<sup>114</sup> “The Oppenheim Collection at South Kensington Museum,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, vol. 9, no. 40, 1906, p. 227.

<sup>115</sup> Deborah L. Krohn, “Cataloguing Hoentschel in Word and Image,” in Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide, Deborah L. Krohn, and Ulrich Leben eds., *Salvaging the Past: Georges Hoentschel and French Decorative Arts from The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Bard Graduate Center: Decorative Arts, Design History, Material Culture: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) p. 66.

as they began to serve as a substitute or stand in for an actual visit to private collections as such privileged access became a desired social goal.<sup>116</sup>

The Blumenthals were perhaps inspired by the collecting models of other influential collectors of the day, such as J.P. Morgan (whose catalogues are described in more detail below), but were more likely driven by a desire to memorialize and capture the entirety of the collection they amassed as a couple before the death of Florence in 1930 and the bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Art at the time of George Blumenthal's death in 1941. Having one's art collection photographed, researched and bound in several large, leather-bound volumes no doubt provided a proud stamp of connoisseurial authenticity for the owner and can also be viewed as an expression of wealth as they were costly to produce.<sup>117</sup> The Blumenthal catalogues were also, more importantly, another method of public engagement with the collection.

Only two hundred examples of the Blumenthal Collection catalogues were printed for private circulation and each copy was organized into the following six volumes which inventories works of art dating from the Byzantine period to the late eighteenth century: paintings-early schools (vol. I); sculpture and bronzes (vol. II); tapestries and furniture (vol. III); works of art, medieval and renaissance-ivories, enamels, majolica, stained glass, etc. (vol. IV); paintings, drawings, sculptures, XVIIIth century (vol. V); furniture and works of art, XVIIIth century (vol. VI).<sup>118</sup>

The Blumenthal catalogues are extremely large in size and format compared to the previous generations of collection catalogues, however the pictures are comparatively few in number.<sup>119</sup> While there may be fewer illustrations compared to earlier examples, the focus of these large volumes accentuates the illustrations rather than on the text. There is no overall introduction to the catalogue, thus the tone and mission of the

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<sup>116</sup> Krohn, "Cataloguing Hoentschel in Word and Image," p. 66.

<sup>117</sup> Osborne, pp. 27-28.

<sup>118</sup> The Blumenthal Collection catalogues conserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art contain a label on the inner jacket of the cover indicating the number of copies printed.

<sup>119</sup> *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 36, no. 10 (October 1941), p. 197.



collector is lacking. Each illustration plate has a corresponding entry with relatively basic information, including title of the work, a brief description, dimensions, publications, and provenance (when known).

Examples of early paintings from Spanish, Italian, and Flemish schools are prominently featured in volume I, while the majority of the other volumes are dedicated to sculpture and decorative arts between the years 1000-1600, the true strength of the collection.<sup>120</sup>

As the Metropolitan Museum Bulletin reported at the time of the Blumenthal bequest:

...*The Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal* has made the contents of the collection known to a small segment of the art world and has provided valuable data on the sources and character of these works...Nowhere in this country, except at The Cloisters and in our own Morgan collection, is it possible to find a finer series of early mediaeval [sic] ivories and enamels. That rarest of all collector's envies, Gothic furniture, is superbly represented with pieces which rival those in the Hôtel de Cluny and the Musée des Arts-Décoratifs....in addition to superlatively fine renaissance marbles and bronzes and other objets d'art...The Blumenthal collection, certainly the largest, richest, and the most catholic group of works of art to be received in many years, is a worthy complement to its predecessors."<sup>121</sup>

Due to the sheer size and scope of the project, the catalogue was published over a four-year period between 1926-1930, of which the first four volumes were completed by 1927.<sup>122</sup> As soon as the first volumes were complete, George Blumenthal sent copies to the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (today the Musée des Arts Décoratifs), as well as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Frick Art Reference Library in New York for their collections.<sup>123</sup> Although there is no concrete evidence, it is likely that George Blumenthal was motivated to send catalogues of his collection to some of the oldest and most respected art institutions, both in New York and abroad, thus establishing a certain legitimization, a sense of legacy, and aura of the collection.

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>122</sup> The last page of volumes 1-4 denote that the catalogue text was printed by G. Kadar and the plates were engraved by E. Doistau and printed by C. Eudes in Paris in January 1926. The last page of volumes 5 and 6 denote that the text was printed by G. Kadar and the plates were engraved by E. Doistau and printed by A. Chassepot and R. Tamburro in Paris in April 1930.

<sup>123</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

In addition to distributing copies to a number of established international art institutions, George Blumenthal also likely sent the collection catalogue to a number of his contemporaries and fellow collectors, such as wealthy American art collector and benefactor of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., Joseph Widener (1871-1943). Widener gifted the National Gallery of Art Library all six volumes of the Blumenthal catalogue in 1943, suggesting that he either acquired them for his own reference, or received them from Blumenthal himself.<sup>124</sup> The Blumenthal catalogues may have in fact inspired a new generation of art collectors.

Because a substantial portion of the Blumenthal collection is presently dispersed, and few interior illustrations of their houses in France survive, the six-volume collection catalogue provides invaluable insight into the Blumenthal's approach to collecting. In his book *The Evolution of Taste in American Collecting*, author and antique dealer, René Brimo, summarizes the heart of the Blumenthal collection consisted of works of art from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, including an impressive series of twelfth and thirteenth-century representations of the Madonna and Child, comparable to those in any world-class museum; fifteenth century wood sculpture; and fine sixteenth century busts, as well as smaller works of art, including enamels, ivories, and ceramics comparable in quality with those of Morgan and Walters."<sup>125</sup> Brimo also asserts that, as a whole, the Blumenthal catalogues illustrate an important grouping of European objects on the market immediately following World War I.<sup>126</sup>

Overall, each category of the Blumenthal collection, divided by volume, reflects all of the great names within the history of art. Within the category of painting, the Blumenthal's primary area of collecting was the Italian Primitive, with an emphasis on the Sienese school, along with Venetian, Flemish, French, and Spanish painters, however they are not

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<sup>124</sup> The title page of each volume is inscribed: "Gift of Joseph E. Widener 11/11/43," *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal*, New York, 6 v. (Paris: Priv. print., A. Lévy, 1926-30), Rare Folio N5220.B68, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, D.C.

<sup>125</sup> Brimo, pp. 190-191.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p. 191.

differentiated by country of origin. Within the eighteenth century, they focused on paintings and drawings predominately in the French rococo and neoclassical style by artists such as Nicolas Lancret, Hubert Robert, and Jean-Baptiste Huet, as well as drawings by François Boucher, Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, and Jacques-Louis David.<sup>127</sup>

George and Florence Blumenthal were also collectors of antique books, manuscripts, prints, and photographs, as well as large-scale Medieval and Renaissance objects, such as mantelpieces and architectural elements, however these categories were not included in the Rubinstein catalogue.<sup>128</sup>

Not much is known about the catalogue's author, Stella Rubinstein-Bloch, however it is likely that the Blumenthals may have been introduced to her in Paris through local dealers or collectors. Her catalogue attributions were used temporarily in the settling of George Blumenthal's estate and underwent re-evaluation by curators at the Metropolitan Museum of Art following the bequest of the Blumenthal collection.<sup>129</sup> Rubenstein-Bloch received a doctorate from the University of Paris and was the author of other select private collection catalogues, such as the Canessa collection of Egyptian, Greek and Roman art (purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1906) and a collection of paintings of Mrs. Liberty E. Holden (presented to the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1916).<sup>130</sup> Clearly, Rubinstein-Bloch collaborated with some of the pre-eminent collectors of the early twentieth century, was familiar with the process of privately printed collection catalogues and bequests to American museums, and was knowledgeable about many different periods and classifications of art.

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p. 190.

<sup>128</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives. As part of the Bequest, George Blumenthal donated 171 books, French prints, and a large collection of French and Italian photographs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

<sup>129</sup> One example of misattribution in the Blumenthal catalogue involved the suite of French furniture from Saint-Cloud which was incorrectly attributed to George Jacob instead of Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené. MMA Archives, Medieval Department.

<sup>130</sup> Patterson, "The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal," p. 108; C. Canessa, Ercole Canessa, Ernest Govett, Stella Rubinstein, Arduino Colasanti, *Illustrated catalogue of the Canessa Collection of rare and valuable objects of art of the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Gothic and Renaissance periods* (New York: Privately printed for C. & E. Canessa, 1919); Liberty Emery Holden, Stella Rubinstein-Bloch, Cleveland Museum of Art, *Catalogue of a collection of paintings, etc. Presented by Mrs. Liberty E. Holden to the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1917).

Interestingly, a decade prior to the publication of the Blumenthal catalogues, Stella Rubinstein published an article on Medieval and Renaissance French furniture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection, incorporating many pieces belonging to George and Florence Blumenthal.<sup>131</sup> Her familiarity with the Blumenthal collection, prior to the completion of the interiors of the Blumenthal's New York residence, demonstrates that she had an intimate knowledge of the house and its early contents.

More background information, however, is known about the editor of the Blumenthal catalogues, Albert Lévy, who came from a familial publishing background. Albert's uncle, Emile Lévy, was the editor of the publishing company, Librairie centrale des beaux-arts, for which he published several large-format illustrated books for prominent international collectors, including J.P. Morgan.<sup>132</sup> Following Emile's death in 1916, Albert took over his uncle's directorship of *Art et Décoration*, a monthly magazine on French decoration published between 1897-1938.<sup>133</sup>

While we have no concrete evidence, George and Florence Blumenthal's collection catalogues were perhaps most directly inspired by J.P. Morgan's large leather-bound, hand-colored catalogues printed on vellum, illustrating his extensive collections of jewels, works of art, miniatures, and watches.<sup>134</sup> The Blumenthals may have selected Albert Lévy as their publisher as a result of his uncle's relationship with Morgan. However, unlike the Blumenthal's catalogues, Morgan's books include more descriptive text, comprising acknowledgments, indexes, introductions, history of mediums, and

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<sup>131</sup> Stella Rubinstein, "French Furniture, Medieval and Renaissance," *International Studio* (May 1917), vol. 61, no. 243, pp. 71-94. Along with the Hoentschel Collection acquired by J.P. Morgan and donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rubinstein credits the Blumenthal Collection as the second most important collection of French Gothic furniture in America.

<sup>132</sup> Morgan likely personally selected Lévy as the publisher of Wilhelm von Bode, *Collection of J. Pierpont Morgan: Bronzes of the Renaissance and Subsequent Periods*, vols. 1-2 (Paris: Librairie Central des Beaux-Arts, 1910); Krohn, "Cataloguing Hoentschel in Word and Image," p. 67.

<sup>133</sup> Deborah L. Krohn, "Cataloguing Hoentschel in Word and Image," p. 67;  
[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art\\_%26\\_D%C3%A9coration](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_%26_D%C3%A9coration).

<sup>134</sup> See George Charles Williamson, *Catalogue of the Collection of Jewels and Precious Works of Art, the Property of J. Pierpont Morgan* (London: Privately printed at the Chiswick Press, 1910) and George Charles Williamson, *Catalogue of the Collection of Miniatures: the Property of J. Pierpont Morgan*, vols. 1-4 (London: Privately Printed at the Chiswick Press, 1906-1908).

detailed entries for each object, as well as provenance. Curiously, as in the case of the Blumenthal catalogues, there is no mention of Morgan as a collector to set the tone and intention for the collection.

Like the Blumenthal catalogues, the Morgan collection catalogues were made in limited quantity (some more limited than others) and were likely distributed by Morgan himself to heads of state and national museums.<sup>135</sup> Morgan's costly catalogue production was rumoured to have been so large that his executors cancelled all uncompleted orders after his death.<sup>136</sup>

Perhaps the most closely related example of a private collection catalogue was that of Marjorie Merriweather Post who, between 1924-1937, composed multiple drafts of a publication on her collection (to be privately printed), the final 1937 edition entitled "Catalogue of Paintings, Sculptures, Tapestries, Embroideries, Laces, Bibelot, Enamels, Porcelains, and Jades in *The Collection of Marjorie Post Davies*."<sup>137</sup> Unlike the Morgan and Blumenthal catalogues that were created once the collection had been completed, the Post volumes represent works in progress that evolved with new acquisitions and were unfortunately never printed. Nonetheless, these large size, leather-bound books contain a general introduction, individual introductions for each individual category, illustrations, and individual catalogue entries, including descriptions and provenance, often with handwritten notes by Post herself, illustrating her direct involvement with the catalogue. While it is not known to whom Mrs. Post planned to distribute these catalogues, or if she intended them to serve as preliminary templates for her future museum collection, a

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<sup>135</sup> "Catalogues of the Collections of J P Morgan at Christie's London in November," *Christie's Press Release* (October 26, 2012). [http://www.christies.com/presscenter/pdf/2012/release\\_valuable\\_manuscripts\\_printed\\_books\\_november\\_2012.pdf](http://www.christies.com/presscenter/pdf/2012/release_valuable_manuscripts_printed_books_november_2012.pdf). One hundred fifty copies of the *Collection of Jewels and Precious Works of Art* were made and forty copies of the *Catalogue of the Collection of Miniatures: the Property of J. Pierpont Morgan* were made and first editions remain highly sought after today.

<sup>136</sup> "Catalogues of the Collections of J P Morgan at Christie's London in November," *Christie's Press Release* (October 26, 2012).

<sup>137</sup> Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens archives. Coincidentally, Marjorie Post and her third husband, Joseph Davies, owned three pieces of eighteenth-century French furniture from the Blumenthal collection, one of which, a bonheur-du-jour, is presently conserved at Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens today (inv. no. 31.3).

phenomenon emerged during the first half of the twentieth century amongst certain private collectors to commemorate their art collections with lavish catalogues. This occurrence may have been a result of internal “collecting” competition, or a desire for one-upmanship, or else a desire to perhaps mark one’s collection for perpetuity prior to its distribution and disassembly.

### The House Museum that Never Was

George and Florence Blumenthal’s collecting practice filled a void in their personal lives following the death of their son, George Blumenthal Jr., in 1908. It also, however, reflected a forward-thinking vision of the legacy of their collection for integration into a public museum, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, although it was initially envisioned as a private museum open to select collectors, scholars, or connoisseurs with a card of introduction.<sup>138</sup> George Blumenthal’s desire to transform his Park Avenue home into a private museum, linked to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, likely took shape around 1908, following the death of the Blumenthal’s only child, and in the early stages of the couple’s collecting. Their intention, however, was only documented in writing following Florence’s death in 1930.<sup>139</sup> The Blumenthals agreed that an afterlife to their collecting activity was integral to fostering a broader and artistic and cultural growth of the American public.<sup>140</sup>

Many businessmen intended to bequeath their collections in exchange for the creation of a public museum in their name, notably John Jacob Astor, who left \$400,000 for the creation of the Astor Library in 1848.<sup>141</sup> The creation of great museums during the 1870s, like the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC in 1869, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1872, and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore,

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<sup>138</sup> Joseph Breck Records, MMA Archives, Box 7 Folder 17: George Blumenthal 1932, 1933. The card of introduction system would be provided by Metropolitan Museum Director, Joseph Breck, or by another member of the Museum staff.

<sup>139</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>140</sup> Osborne, p. 33.

<sup>141</sup> “The Astor Library Opens in New York,”

<http://libraryhistory.pbworks.com/w/page/16964724/The%20Astor%20Library%20Opens%20in%20New%20York>.

Maryland the following year, testifies to the desire of businessmen to glorify their names through the paintings they collected.

It was during the first quarter of the twentieth century that elite collectors often competed to create their own museums as testaments to their own personal success.<sup>142</sup> Steel magnate Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) and banker J.P. Morgan (1837-1913) in New York, as well as drug manufacturer Albert C. Barnes (1872-1951) outside Philadelphia, all invested money in their own museums and built houses and libraries for their sizeable collections.<sup>143</sup> It was also the period when the progressive idea to give back to the community (in the form of paintings, antiques, and books) began to develop as a means to lift national taste and educate the public while reducing inconvenient new taxes through philanthropic gestures.<sup>144</sup>

The Blumenthal's extended vision for their collection directly relates to contemporary debates about art, education, and society. Just as George and Florence Blumenthal were not the first collectors to envision their home and collection as a public museum, they were also not the first with the intention to preserve their residence as a branch of the Metropolitan Museum. In 1917, banker Isaac D. Fletcher left the Museum his Fifth Avenue house and art collection; the house was subsequently sold to Harry F. Sinclair and houses the Ukrainian Institute of America today.<sup>145</sup> Other instances of Gilded Age mansions that were subsequently converted into museums or public institutions during this period include the Warburg Mansion (donated as a permanent home for The Jewish Museum in 1947), a 1913 Beaux-Arts mansion, once owned by Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt III, and purchased in 1994 by Ronald Lauder (converted in 2001 to the Neue Gallery dedicated to German and Austrian art), and the James B. Duke House (donated

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<sup>142</sup> Sam Watters, "Lost L.A.: Huntington's private tribute to wife Arabella, Railroad magnate housed his late wife's beloved art in a gallery that is no more," *Los Angeles Times* (May 14, 2011), <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/may/14/home/la-hm-lost-la-arabella-huntington-20110514>.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> See <http://thejewishmuseum.org/about>; <https://shop.neuegalerie.org/products/1048-fifth-avenue-from-mansion-to-museum>; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_F.\\_Sinclair\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_F._Sinclair_House)

by Doris Duke in 1958 to the New York University Institute of Fine Arts).<sup>146</sup>

In a letter dated March 27, 1917 from collector John G. Johnson of Philadelphia to the connoisseur and dealer, Bernard Berenson, Johnson described his impression of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue house following a recent visit:

He has a huge central room, into which his street entrance leads, two stories high, furnished in very severe taste, but humanized by exceedingly fine velvets and tapestries. As you know, he has some exceedingly fine marbles, terra cottas and bronzes. The living rooms are very luxurious and homelike. Altogether, it is a unique and very attractive museum home.<sup>147</sup>

Johnson's description juxtaposes the adjective "severe" connoting a serious collecting style, with the softening of the living room by fine textiles to create a "luxurious and homelike" environment. This effective combination of a "museum home" is a testament to the Blumenthal's collecting partnership blending museum-quality works of art in a comfortable home environment.

Even the author and art critic, Marcel Proust, commented on the Blumenthal's museum-quality home, declaring that "[t]heir New York home was the richest museum of French Gothic art in the US," implying that may have known the couple and seen the collection in person.<sup>148</sup>

The Blumenthal's concept of transforming a private house into a public museum may have been influenced by art collector, Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) who, subsequent to Mrs. Frick's death in 1931, opened his collection to the public in 1935 just a few blocks from the Blumenthal's mansion.<sup>149</sup> Although we have no concrete evidence that Frick and Blumenthal knew each other, George Blumenthal sent the Frick Art Reference Library copies of his collection catalogue as soon as the first four volumes were

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<sup>146</sup> <https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/about/history.htm>.

<sup>147</sup> The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Biblioteca Berenson, Villa I Tatti, Florence.

<sup>148</sup> Pyra Wise, *Bulletin d'informations proustiennes* (BIP), n°34, 2004, p. 25.

<sup>149</sup> [www.frick.org/visit/museum](http://www.frick.org/visit/museum).



published in 1927, as previously discussed earlier in this chapter.<sup>150</sup> One can therefore deduce that the two families were introduced through the same wealthy social and collecting circles and there may have been prior correspondence.

The Blumenthals indeed understood, like Frick, the concept of preserving their collection in situ in their Park Avenue residence and the importance for the visitor of encountering the collection as a whole. Their initial desire to keep the collection intact was also a method of control and stability counteracting the unexpected loss of their son. This method of coping was similar to that of the wealthy Jewish banker and collector, Moïse de Camondo (1860-1935), who amassed a world-renowned collection of eighteenth-century paintings and decorative arts in the early twentieth century and donated his Parisian townhouse and its contents to the French state in 1936 in honor of his son who died in World War I.<sup>151</sup> Following the loss of his son, Camondo scarcely allowed any of the objects to leave his house or to be lent to international institutions for exhibit due to a fear of separation. While the Blumenthals lent generously to the Metropolitan Museum and did not seem to experience this same fear of separation from their collection, the construction of the collection as a whole was perhaps a means of control, recovery, and re-building from their loss.

As cultural critic and book collector himself, Walter Benjamin, astutely analyzed in his essay on collecting, with possession comes a predilection for control and an obsession with order of things:

The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill...[e]verything remembered and though, everything conscious, becomes the pedestal, the frame, the base, the lock of his property. The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership-for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his

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<sup>150</sup> In a letter dated December 19, 1927 from Frick Art Reference Librarian, Ethelwyn Manning to George Blumenthal, Manning thanked him for sending the first four volumes of the collection catalogue and mentioned that Miss Frick was very pleased. In 1931, Blumenthal sent the Frick Art Reference Library the remaining catalogue volumes 5 and 6. "George and Florence Blumenthal Folder," Frick Art Reference Library.

<sup>151</sup> Mcauley, "A Secret Paris Museum and an Aristocratic Family Decimated by the Holocaust."

object.<sup>152</sup>

In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart has referred to collecting as a method of memorialization where the relationship between the collector and objects is marked by a sense of "longing" and "nostalgia."<sup>153</sup> The world of collecting has also been referred to as a hermetic one, organized and arranged according to principles determined by the collector, therefore, expressing the collector's own identity.<sup>154</sup> Stewart's concepts are useful in analyzing the Blumenthal's collecting practices as the couple likely related to this method of collecting and used their collection, both in New York and in France, as a means of identity and memorialization following the loss of their son.

As a German Jew, George Blumenthal may have also succeeded in creating a new identity through his collection and, similar to collector Moïse de Camondo in Paris, this facilitated a means of identity, recognition, and acceptance in the art circles of New York society. During this period of anti-Semitism and discrimination in New York, it could not have been easy for George Blumenthal to assimilate or be accepted in certain social milieus. Jews were not yet fully integrated into many of the mainstream professions, such as the economy and government, and did not yet feel at home in American society.<sup>155</sup> As previously discussed in Part 2A, in order to purchase a summer retreat in the Adirondacks, Blumenthal was obligated to purchase separate land and build cabins for himself and his Jewish friends as they were not welcome in most established Great Camps. As the Metropolitan Museum's only Jewish Trustee among thirty-five other non-Jewish board members, followed by its first Jewish president, it was likely that there was a strong resentment and prejudice within his philanthropic circles as well.<sup>156</sup> Although we have no concrete evidence, it is likely that the Blumenthal's diverse collection,

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<sup>152</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library, A Talk about Book Collecting, *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 60.

<sup>153</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 23.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 152, 162.

<sup>155</sup> Oscar I. Janowsky, "A New Look at America Jewry," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, no. 4 (June 1965), p. 400.

<sup>156</sup> George M. Goodwin, "A New Jewish Elite: Curators, Directors, and Benefactors of American Art Museums," *Modern Judaism*, vol. 18, no. 1. (February, 1998), p. 66.

including paintings, bronzes, ivories, tapestries, and furniture, from Medieval through the eighteenth century, as well as Art Deco, facilitated his social interactions and provided a means of assimilation into society.

Print curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, W.M. Ivins, Jr., noted after George Blumenthal's death that: "he kept up with the Joneses, or rather, in sporting spirit, went them one better."<sup>157</sup> Ivins' comment suggests that Blumenthal had a competitive spirit and perhaps used collecting as a means of demonstrating wealth and refinement, as well as creating an identity in society. For Florence Blumenthal, however, collecting facilitated new philanthropic initiatives, as previously discussed in Part 1.

Beginning in 1930, George Blumenthal discussed the re-organization of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue mansion as a museum with a proposed uninterrupted circuit of rooms beginning on the ground floor with the Spanish courtyard followed by the Venetian ballroom, then continuing to the second floor overlooking the courtyard, leading to the salon, corner room, and dining room, and finally culminating with the third floor gallery.<sup>158</sup> A series of temporary exhibitions organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (accompanied by objects from the Museum's collection) were also envisioned as potential installations in the two bedrooms and small dining room on the second floor. In order to protect the works of art, visitors would not be permitted to wonder through all of the rooms, small objects could be fastened down without altering their appearance, and stanchions would delineate pathways.<sup>159</sup> These early discussions illustrate George Blumenthal's vision for a 'museum house' that would highlight his collection in its original environment and provide a new context for the Metropolitan Museum's collection. This was a new concept of presentation unlike any other precedents.

In March 1930, just a few months before Florence Blumenthal's death, *Town & Country Magazine* published an article on the Blumenthals' Park Avenue home with detailed

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<sup>157</sup> W.M. Ivins, Jr., "George Blumenthal as Connoisseur," *Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal, A Special Exhibition* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943).

<sup>158</sup> Joseph Breck Records, MMA Archives Box 7 Folder17: George Blumenthal 1932, 1933.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

illustrations of the rooms and descriptions of highlights from the collection based on information in the Stella Rubenstein-Bloch catalogues.<sup>160</sup> The article praised the assembly and display of the Blumenthal collection in comparison to a “simulated museum presentation”:

There is an opportunity only to express appreciation for the discretion with which these rare things have been assembled in a house which is never permitted to degenerate into the stilted ritual of a museum. Always there is the connotation of a dignified residence in which the owners live understandingly among the ancient treasures which they have devoted a large part of their lives to assembling.<sup>161</sup>

The magazine publication vividly articulates how the Blumenthals lived amongst the objects in their collection. The article also likely served as a means of memorializing the couple’s collecting partnership and assembled interiors, given Florence Blumenthal’s declining health and the fact that the ultimate fate of the Blumenthal collection had not yet been determined. Finally, the article communicates the contemporary perception and unsuccessful representations of current modes of museum display that were often artificial, taken out of context, or intended for an elite audience.

As James Rorimer recalled in the following statement, George Blumenthal looked to the Metropolitan Museum curators for advice on the future planning for his house and collection:

In 1930, when I was a young assistant curator, Mr. Blumenthal asked me and one of my colleagues what we thought he should do with his collection and his house. He asked us to write him a one-copy letter-no carbons. I wrote him that if he wanted people to see how he lived, he should keep his collection and his house intact, but preferably the collection should come to the Metropolitan. Well, he didn’t like people who were too curious about his house, and his will reflects his decision.<sup>162</sup>

While George and Florence Blumenthal most certainly contemplated and discussed the destiny and legacy of their collection before 1930, George Blumenthal’s canvassing of Metropolitan Museum staff at this moment was certainly intentional as it coincided with

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<sup>160</sup> Patterson, “The Residence of Mr. George Blumenthal,” pp. 63-70, 108.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, p. 108.

<sup>162</sup> “The Talk of the Town,” p. 24.

the year of Florence Blumenthal's death and a time when the future of the Blumenthal collection was particularly relevant.

George Blumenthal's remark that he didn't like people who were "too curious about his house" is contradictory to his original Will in which he expressed his desire for the house and collection to become a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and remain open to the public. Perhaps this was Rorimer's tactic, as director, of justifying the Metropolitan Museum's decision to ultimately tear down the Blumenthal mansion and absorb the collection.

George Blumenthal's final decision in 1941 to bequeath a substantial part of his collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and allow the Museum to tear down his Park Avenue house was not a result of his dislike for public curiosity, but instead reflective of his acute understanding of the financial burden such a bequest could have on a non-profit art institution, like the Metropolitan, during difficult economic times. (See more information about the bequest later in this chapter) George Blumenthal's leadership qualities, and his intimate knowledge of the institution's financial situation, also set him apart.

In April 1932, discussions for the reorganization of the Blumenthal residence as a museum continued and new proposals were outlined to George Blumenthal in a letter from the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>163</sup> Detailed plans describe the conversion of the west side entrance of the house for employee use, the transformation of the kitchen into attendants' dressing rooms, the transformation of the servants' dining room into offices for the curator and secretary (connected by an adjoining reception room), the transformation of the main reception room into exhibition space with an entrance from the Spanish Patio, the conversion of the fourth floor into a work rooms for cleaning, repairs, and other administrative offices, the addition of a cloakroom and a table for the display of catalogues for sale in the first floor reception room on the left side, and the installation of a public toilet near the entrance, possibly adjoining the Venetian

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<sup>163</sup> Joseph Breck Records, MMA Archives Box 7 Folder17.

ballroom.<sup>164</sup> The Museum's preparation and advanced thought process in anticipating the needs involved in the transformation of the Blumenthal's residence into a functioning public museum illustrates the institution's interest and willingness to accommodate George Blumenthal's wishes.

In April 1937, then Metropolitan Museum director, Herbert Eustis Winlock, wrote to George Blumenthal officially proposing the possibility of utilizing the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence as an outpost of the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>165</sup> Architectural material, including panels, ceilings and fireplaces from the drawing room, and woodwork from the dining room, as well as all works of art in the collection dated prior to 1720, would be relocated to the Museum and showcased in a Renaissance sculpture hall of a new wing "N" which he hoped would be erected in time of the gift.<sup>166</sup> In addition, Winlock believed it was important to disperse some of the architectural elements from the Blumenthal collection amongst different Museum galleries, perhaps also as a means of demonstrating to collectors and donors how to integrate large bequests within different areas of the Museum's collection.<sup>167</sup>

It is clear from this exchange with Blumenthal that Winlock, at the time, envisioned using the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence as a repository for the Metropolitan Museum's collection and its rotating exhibits and instead intended to showcase objects from the Blumenthal collection at the main building of the Museum. Several curatorial factors may have also been driving these decisions during Blumenthal's presidency, including economic uncertainty following the Great Depression, the need for more exhibition space, and the desire to de-centralize the Museum's collection in case of war.

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<sup>164</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> The cut-off date of 1720 was used by George Blumenthal in his Will recorded in 1941.

<sup>167</sup> Donors frequently placed restrictions on large bequests requiring the Museum to display one's entire collection together. This was the case with collector and founder of the New York department store, Benjamin Altman (1840-1913), who donated his collection of old-master paintings, sculpture, and works of art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1913 with the condition that the whole collection would be kept together as a separate entity. Francis Haskell, "The Benjamin Altman Bequest," *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, v. 3 (1970), p. 264; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

In his Last Will and Testament recorded in 1941, George Blumenthal stated that it had originally been his intention to leave his house at Fifty East Seventieth Street, containing select articles of personal property, in addition to a sum of money for maintenance, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to operate as a part or branch of its museum.<sup>168</sup> However, it ultimately became impossible for Blumenthal and the Museum to predict the appropriate amount of money required to perpetually maintain such a branch. Furthermore, the institution would not produce sufficient income to sustain the house on its own and would have to assume the burden of allocating a portion of its funds for its maintenance. The Blumenthal bequest unfortunately came to fruition shortly after the outbreak of World War II that most certainly added to the financial uncertainty of the period and contributed to Blumenthal's desire to financially protect the Museum to the best of his ability.

As a result, Blumenthal decided against the advisability of founding such a branch museum (having also been strongly counseled against it likely by peers, colleagues, and fellow collectors) and instead bequeathed the house and land to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, instructing that the house be dismantled (following the transfer of desired structural parts of the house to the present Museum building), the remaining lands sold, and the proceeds from the sale of the land and remaining structural parts of the house be applied to the installation of the conserved structural parts of the house at the Museum.<sup>169</sup> (See Part 2A for more information on the dismantling of the Blumenthal's New York residence)

Provided that such an installation could conveniently be made, George Blumenthal indicated a preference for the conservation and transfer of the Spanish Patio and two rooms on the second floor, including the room running along Park Avenue to the south end of the house, and the adjoining library running from Park Avenue westerly toward the dining room.<sup>170</sup> It is not clear from this source of documentation if Blumenthal

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<sup>168</sup> "Last Will and Testament of George Blumenthal," January 9, 1941, George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives, pp. 6-7.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

envisioned the installation and recreation of both of these rooms in their entirety as period rooms, or merely select panelling. Elements of antique wood panelling from the Park Avenue residence were in fact subsequently transferred to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, including twenty-six carved oak panels decorated with heraldic shields and portraits of the donor, cardinal Georges d'Amboise (1460–1510) and Louis XII (1462–1515; ruled 1498–1515), previously commissioned for the chapel of the Château de Gaillon, belonging to Cardinal d'Amboise, in Normandy, France.<sup>171</sup>

As previously discussed in correspondence with Winlock in 1937, George Blumenthal bequeathed his collection of works of art made before the year 1720 from his New York residence to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (allowing the Museum to select any suitable additions, within the same date range, to its collections), under the designation “Blumenthal Bequest.”<sup>172</sup> The Museum received approximately three hundred twenty-seven objects, including paintings, furniture, textiles, tapestries and rugs, bronzes, jewelry, ceramics, enamels, metalwork, sculptures, and ivories between July and December 1941, followed by any remaining items in April 1943.<sup>173</sup> George Blumenthal also created a fund from which the purchase of works of art could be made, under the designation “Purchased from the Ann and George Blumenthal Fund.”<sup>174</sup> The transfer of the Blumenthal collection to the Metropolitan Museum was the final means of public engagement, mobility, and sociality.

A book conserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art records preliminary label information for all of the objects in the collection received as gifts from George Blumenthal, Florence Blumenthal, Mary Ann Blumenthal, and George and Mary Ann Blumenthal, including a typed letter to the Board of Trustees of the Museum from George Blumenthal (dated June 1941) confirming the designation of the received articles

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<sup>171</sup> See inv. nos. 41.493a-m and 41.494a-m, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>172</sup> “Last Will and Testament of George Blumenthal,” January 9, 1941, George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives, p. 7.

<sup>173</sup> William Thompson Bonner, *New York: The World's Metropolis* (New York: R.L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1924), p. 304; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>174</sup> “Last Will and Testament of George Blumenthal,” January 9, 1941, George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives, p. 7.



as “Gift of George Blumenthal.”<sup>175</sup> Because the credit line attached to the 1941 Blumenthal bequest only mentions George Blumenthal, and the creation of the Mary Ann Payne Blumenthal Foundation in the 1960s effectively minimizes the memory of the joint partnership between George and Florence, this book serves as the principle souvenir recognizing Florence’s role as collector and donor. However, this book does not appear to be known or visible to a wide audience.

In May 1941, one month prior to his death, George Blumenthal also amended the conditions previously attached to the George and Florence Blumenthal Fund of \$1 million donated to the Museum by the couple in 1928, discussed in Part 1.<sup>176</sup> As the sole survivor of Florence, George stipulated that upon his death, all of the securities and property in the fund would become part of the general endowment fund of the museum and would no longer be separately invested or earmarked. This allowed the Museum to use the principal freely for any purpose and any new acquisitions made with these funds were not designated as having been purchased out of this donation.<sup>177</sup> As president of the Museum, George Blumenthal would have been well aware of the institutional advantages of transforming his former gift into a free and unconditional fund.

The Blumenthal’s residence located at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street was bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art under George Blumenthal’s Will dated June 9, 1941, however, after his death, it was officially transferred to the Museum on November 15, 1941.<sup>178</sup> In order to prepare the collection for exhibition as promptly as possible, the Trustees set up the account known as “Suspense: repair and installation of objects of art in the George Blumenthal Collection” to cover the expenses of the removal of objects incorporated into the walls of the Blumenthal residence, including the stained glass

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<sup>175</sup> *The Blumenthal Collection: scrapbook, 1909-1941* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art).

<sup>176</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> In September 1941, the Blumenthal’s Park Avenue house was appraised at \$815,000 and George Blumenthal’s total estate was appraised at \$8m. Katherine C. Moore, “Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1,” Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

panels in the windows, the restoration of objects and repairs, and the washing and relining of tapestries and rugs.<sup>179</sup>

At the time of his death, George Blumenthal's second wife, Mary Ann Payne Blumenthal (1889-1973), was his principal beneficiary and was granted permission to remain in the Park Avenue property in the possession of all remaining works of art (post 1720) for a period of no more than two years.<sup>180</sup> In his Will, George Blumenthal also bequeathed Mary Ann the sum of \$1.5 million, as well as 54 percent of the estate, including silver, pictures, works of art, jewelry, glass, porcelain, linen, house-hold effects, and furnishings."<sup>181</sup> The Will stipulated that should Mary Ann Blumenthal refuse to accept any of the articles of tangible personal property, they would therefore be transferred to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and any surviving works of art in her possession at the time of her death would also pass to the Museum.<sup>182</sup>

In addition to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, George Blumenthal bequeathed nineteen percent of his estate to Mount Sinai Hospital and established a number of trusts, including the "George and Mary Ann Blumenthal Fund," three percent to the Jewish Philanthropic Societies of New York, and the remainder to surviving relatives, including ten percent to his nephew, Henry Blumenthal, of London, eight percent to Alice Cahn Hellmann of London, and two percent to Hans Loewenthal of England.<sup>183</sup> George

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<sup>179</sup> MMA archives, Medieval Department.

<sup>180</sup> George Blumenthal specified that Mary Ann Blumenthal specifically requested the two-year limitation of residency and did not wish to occupy the Park Avenue house for a longer period. "Last Will and Testament of George Blumenthal," January 9, 1941, George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives, pp. 6-8; "Blumenthal's Art to go to Museum," *untitled newspaper* (July 12, 1941).

<sup>181</sup> "Excerpts from the Will of George Blumenthal, Part Two" (Will dated January 9, 1941), MMA archives, Medieval Department; "Blumenthal's Art to go to Museum," *untitled newspaper* (July 12, 1941).

<sup>182</sup> To avoid paying inheritance tax, Mary Ann Blumenthal decided to release the works of art left to her in George Blumenthal's will to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and re-purchase only select desired pieces from the Museum. George Blumenthal's Will granted the Museum permission to sell any articles they do not wish to keep for exhibition or teaching purposes. "Excerpts from the Will of George Blumenthal, Part Two" (Will dated January 9, 1941), MMA archives, Medieval Department; "Blumenthal's Art to go to Museum," *untitled newspaper* (July 12, 1941).

<sup>183</sup> "Blumenthal's Art to go to Museum," *untitled newspaper* (July 12, 1941).

Blumenthal's legacy reflects his principal interests and activities during his lifetime, notably his commitment and dedication to the Metropolitan Museum and Mount Sinai Hospital. His donation to the Jewish Philanthropic Societies of New York also reflects the actions of many Jews of Blumenthal's generation who were not conventionally observant or practicing, but consistently supported the community.

In February 1942, less than a year after George Blumenthal's death, Mary Ann Blumenthal relinquished her two-year ownership of the Park Avenue house. Even though it had officially been transferred to the Museum in November 1941, as a result of the commencement of World War II, the Metropolitan Museum petitioned for a delay of legal ownership of the Blumenthal residence for five years or for two years after the war (whichever came first) and would use the mansion as a repository for extra storage and offices in the meantime in exchange for a fee.<sup>184</sup> However, commissioner Robert Moses, who served as a liaison between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the City of New York, was opposed to the use of the house as a branch museum and had previously discussed the matter with the Blumenthals who believed that the house "would have little value after their deaths and that the lot should be sold at a proper time as a site."<sup>185</sup>

In 1942, a meeting was held at the Municipal Building with commissioners and Museum Counsel to discuss real estate taxes and the cost of dismantling the Blumenthal residence.<sup>186</sup> The Museum requested permission to leave the house intact for an indefinite period of time while it researched potential collaborations with the New York Public Library and Julliard. The City commissioner was not in favor of this proposal and believed it would jeopardize the City's interest in parcels of land from other New York institutions.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art also proposed to use the adjacent Arthur Curtiss James' house as James died three weeks before George Blumenthal. Katherine C. Moore, "Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1," Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University.

<sup>185</sup> Katherine C. Moore, "Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1," Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University.

<sup>186</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

During the War years between 1942-1944, the Blumenthal's Park Avenue house functioned as a temporary branch museum and was open to the public three afternoons per week with free admission, showcasing arms and armour from the Metropolitan Museum's permanent collection and serving as an extra repository for Museum storage.<sup>188</sup> This period demonstrates, albeit briefly, that the Blumenthal house did indeed function as originally envisioned. The City of New York was, however, opposed to maintaining an active exhibit at the Blumenthal house, as well as its usage for storage, or any action other than the sale of the land.<sup>189</sup> The city likely feared this might influence other institutions to accept gifts of property for temporary transitional spaces that could ultimately exploit the real estate market during an economic downturn.

During this temporary transitional period, Mary Ann Payne Blumenthal donated a number of eighteenth-century French decorative arts to the Metropolitan Museum (previously purchased by George and Florence Blumenthal), including the suite of Sené furniture (described earlier in this chapter), and also lent the portrait of George Blumenthal by Adolphe Dechenaud, however it did not ultimately remain at the Museum.<sup>190</sup> (See Fig. 70)

It was also during this period that the Museum organized the exhibition "Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal, A Special Exhibition" which was held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Fifth Avenue building, beginning in December 1943 and remaining on display for nearly a year.<sup>191</sup> This concept of a "masterpieces" exhibition

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<sup>188</sup> The special arms and armor exhibition was originally planned for the period of July 7-October 17, 1942, but was likely prolonged. During this transition period, a Mr. Obershaw and his wife served as caretakers of the property and lived in a small apartment in the servant's wing of the Blumenthal's house. Katherine C. Moore, "Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1," Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University; George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives; MMA archives, Medieval Department.

<sup>189</sup> Katherine C. Moore, "Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1," Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University.

<sup>190</sup> In 1933, the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired a portrait of George Blumenthal painted by Charles Hopkinson (accession number 33.154). George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>191</sup> Interestingly, the evening reception held on December 7, 1943 in celebration of the opening of the Blumenthal exhibition was the first event since the outbreak of World War I. Maude Riley,

from a private collection was highly unusual for the Metropolitan Museum during this period and had rarely been organized before, perhaps serving as a prototype for the future. The press expressed a tremendous amount of anticipation leading up to the opening of the Blumenthal exhibition and announced its arrival at the Metropolitan Museum in several publications, including the *New York Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, the *New Yorker*, *Magazine Antiques*, *Art Digest*, and the *Art News*, to name just a few.<sup>192</sup>

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, the Blumenthal collection established a new public identity that, until then, had only been represented through a limited edition catalogue distributed only to a select grouping of connoisseurs and institutions. While displayed at the Museum, the Blumenthal's private collection and personal passion for collecting art was shared with a larger audience, potentially encouraging other private collectors to make similar bequests and gifts to museums.

The exhibition celebrated approximately two hundred twenty-four objects given and bequeathed by George Blumenthal to the Museum, but also demonstrated the range and quality of the Blumenthal collection as "a standing testimony to his unusual and sensitive connoisseurship in certain very important aspects of the art of the Gothic and Renaissance periods and of the eighteenth century."<sup>193</sup> Objects featured in the exhibition included a group of twenty-four Renaissance paintings by artists such as El Greco and Tintoretto, certain examples never before exhibited in the United States, and two hundred

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"Blumenthal Gifts on View at Metropolitan," *The Art Digest*, vol. 18, no. 6 (December 15, 1943), p. 5. In conjunction with the Blumenthal exhibition, the Metropolitan Museum published in 1943 the catalogue *Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal. A Special Exhibition*. For more information on the Blumenthal collection exhibition, see "The Blumenthal Collection," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release, December 4 & 5, 1943; "The George Blumenthal Collection," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release* (December 7, 1943); Edward Alden Jewell, "Blumenthal Art to Go on Display," *The New York Times* (December 7, 1943); "Blumenthal Art on Public View," *The Sun* (December 7, 1943).

<sup>192</sup> Press Clippings and Ephemera Collection, MMA Archives, Box 41 "Exhibitions: Press Clippings, 1943-44," Folder 2, Blumenthal Collection, 1943.

<sup>193</sup> The objects in the Blumenthal exhibition, as well as the objects delivered to the Museum prior to George Blumenthal's death, were kept in tact as a group under the supervision of Museum curator of Renaissance and Post-Renaissance Art, Preston Remington, until after the exhibition when they would then be allocated to the different curatorial departments by the Director and the Trustees would determine a general policy in regards to the collection. MMA archives, Medieval Department; Ivins, Jr., "George Blumenthal as Connoisseur."

Medieval and Renaissance objects, including carved ivories, sculptures, enamels, metalwork, etched crystal, furniture, tapestries, and twenty-five pieces of Italian and Spanish maiolica, as well as select eighteenth-century French sculpture and furniture.<sup>194</sup> The exhibition spanned five galleries and a marble bust of George Blumenthal by Paul Landowski (discussed in Part 1) was placed at the entrance to the gallery to greet visitors.<sup>195</sup> The Metropolitan Museum's press release announcing the exhibition once again credited the amassing of the collection to George Blumenthal, without any mention of Florence, affirming, "the collection reflects his taste."<sup>196</sup>

A catalogue, highlighting primarily Medieval ivories and enamels, as well as Renaissance sculpture, bronzes, paintings, and tapestries, accompanied the exhibition with a preface by the then newly appointed Museum president, William Church Osborn, as well as a short essay entitled "George Blumenthal As Connoisseur" by William Mills Ivins, Jr.<sup>197</sup> In his essay, Ivins strove to portray the man behind the collection, once again emphasizing George Blumenthal's unusual tactile sense as "an element of incalculable importance in all good connoisseurship."<sup>198</sup>

Ivins's analysis of George Blumenthal as "no reader and no scholar in the academic sense" and a "hater of scholarship in many of its more familiar manifestations," could be construed as a criticism even though George and Florence Blumenthal were dedicated to supporting the Museum and the mounting of the "Masterpieces" exhibition celebrated the

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<sup>194</sup> "The Blumenthal Collection," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release, December 4 & 5, 1943; "The George Blumenthal Collection," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release, December 7, 1943; "Blumenthal Art on Public View," *The Sun* (December 7, 1943); Edward Alden Jewell, "Blumenthal Art to Go on Display," *The New York Times* (December 7, 1943).

<sup>195</sup> A fifteenth-century French fireplace was also used as a backdrop for atmosphere in one gallery, although it is not clear if it was part of the Blumenthal collection or was previously in the collection of the Museum. "The George Blumenthal Collection," The Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release, December 7, 1943; A.Z.Kruse, "At the Art Galleries, George Blumenthal Collection Reveals his Deep Interest in Religious Art," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 19, 1943).

<sup>196</sup> "The Blumenthal Collection," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Press Release* (December 4 & 5, 1943).

<sup>197</sup> See *Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal, A Special Exhibition* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943).

<sup>198</sup> Ivins, Jr., "George Blumenthal as Connoisseur."

Blumenthal bequest to the institution. The idea of a “scholar” is defined in this instance as an academic or formally educated individual in art history. This definition implies that it was rare for collectors to be as knowledgeable or have bought as wisely as George Blumenthal without the proper educational training. Perhaps Ivins and George Blumenthal also experienced disagreements in the past about works of art in his collection or regarding certain gifts to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, prompting Ivins to him to express these strong comments.

Ivins, however, also described Blumenthal as having “an extraordinarily long memory of objects, prices and the traditions of the game.”<sup>199</sup> The almost instinctive, tactile connoisseurship quality of George Blumenthal could be constructed as at odds with the cerebral scholarship among the museum environment during this time. Amidst the scholars at the Metropolitan Museum that he so often collaborated with as trustee, member of the Executive Committee and Finance Committee, and eventually President, perhaps George Blumenthal felt it necessary to defend his lack of official academic training and position himself instead as a self-taught connoisseur and collector. Clearly, colleagues at the Museum, such as curator Joseph Breck, were confident in George Blumenthal’s connoisseurship abilities since Breck had previously relied on Blumenthal’s opinion regarding the authenticity of a Gothic stained glass window in Paris.<sup>200</sup>

Contemporary reviews of the Blumenthal collection exhibition were mixed. One particularly flattering review credited George Blumenthal with bringing together “more than just a collection, it was for him a way of life,” justifying the author’s brief leave from war duties in order to visit the Blumenthal exhibition and experience the uniqueness of the collection first-hand.<sup>201</sup> The same critic also identified George Blumenthal as the

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<sup>199</sup> Emily Genauer, “Metropolitan Gets Blumenthal Collection,” *New York World-Telegram*, Art and Antiques, (December 11, 1943).

<sup>200</sup> MMA Archives, Joseph Breck Records Box 7 Folder13.

<sup>201</sup> Alfred M. Frankfurter, “End of an Era: The Blumenthal Collection at The Metropolitan,” *Art News*, vol. 42 (December 15-31, 1943), p. 24.

“last surviving practitioner of what might be called the princely tradition of collecting,” associating him in a long line of elite collectors and aristocrats, such as the Ducs de Bern, the Medici, Charles I, the Earl of Arundel, Catherine the Great, Sir Horace Walpole, Louis Philippe, the Rothschilds, and J.P. Morgan the elder, all bound together by “the love of beautiful things.”<sup>202</sup> George Blumenthal was likely compared to these earlier princely collectors due to the palatial home setting for his European works of art on Park Avenue and Seventieth Street. Blumenthal may have also been influenced by the “Grand Manner” of princes and European traditions of collecting growing up in Frankfurt, a model he later strove to emulate as an adult in New York.

Another, less enthusiastic, review questioned the exhibition catalogue’s repetitive reference to Mr. Blumenthal’s “knowing, very discriminating and long remembering hands” and its accuracy in regards to his collecting paintings, but supported the value of one’s tactile sense when collecting sculpture and smaller works of art.<sup>203</sup> The same review also emphasized the superb quality of paintings in the collection and affirmed they were the “shining moment” of the exhibition.<sup>204</sup> However, another review asserted that a tactile-minded, “finger tip collector,” cannot account for the broad range of mediums, surfaces, and varied quality of the sculptures in the collection, from banal to elegant.<sup>205</sup> These diverse responses and mixed reviews do not reflect a dislike for the Blumenthal collection as a whole, but rather a misunderstanding of or aversion to Ivins’ introduction and failure to correlate the relationship between a tactile strategy of collecting and all of the works on display.

Other reviews emphasized George Blumenthal’s interest in ecclesiastical subject matter in his vast collection of Gothic, Renaissance, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century art, while some proclaimed that the collector did not have a particular devotion to

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 24, 27. Comparisons to J.P. Morgan occur throughout George Blumenthal’s career and collecting practices. The relationship between the two bankers is discussed in more detail in Part I.

<sup>203</sup> Genauer, “Metropolitan Gets Blumenthal Collection.”

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>205</sup> Riley, “Blumenthal Gifts on View at Metropolitan,” p. 5. The cover of this issue of *The Art Digest* featured a fifteenth-century Florentine relief of a Madonna and Child from the Blumenthal collection.



any particular school or style, medium, material, or subject.<sup>206</sup> While some adjectives used to describe the Blumenthal collection were “showy,” and “rich,” supposedly reflecting George Blumenthal’s flashy taste, others characterized the collection as “strange,” however many critics agreed that the bequest “will greatly enrich the museum collections,” including the field of tapestries which will make the Metropolitan Museum one of the richest collections, thanks to Blumenthal, outside of Hapsburg and Madrid.<sup>207</sup> The criticisms of the works of art as “showy” and “rich,” were perhaps a critical response to the Metropolitan Museum’s decision to celebrate the Blumenthal’s collection and bequest during a period of war and instability for the country.

The Metropolitan Museum also featured highlights from the Blumenthal collection in the 1957 exhibition “Collector’s Choice,” in conjunction with the opening of new galleries permanently devoted to special exhibitions, to illustrate the breadth of interests and taste of a number of collections given to the Museum between 1890-1940.<sup>208</sup> Amidst objects from the collections of J.P. Morgan, Michael Friedsam, Benjamin Altman, and William K. Vanderbilt, the Museum selected a grouping of fifteenth-century tapestries, the painting “The Adoration of the Magi” by Joos van Gent, as well as examples of Gothic, Renaissance, and French eighteenth-century royal furniture from the Blumenthal collection to emphasize his diverse scope of collecting.<sup>209</sup> It was perhaps this moment of positioning George Blumenthal in the context of other important Metropolitan Museum donors that breathed new life into the collection that could now be appreciated by a younger generation. It may also have been the impetus for the Museum to proceed with plans to reinstall the Spanish Patio that would take place over the coming years. More than fifty years after the “Collector’s Choice” exhibition, two Renaissance paintings from George and Florence Blumenthal’s collection, one depicting “The Madonna and Child” and another depicting “The Virgin and Child with Saints Dominic,

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<sup>206</sup> A.Z. Kruse, “At the Art Galleries, George Blumenthal Collection Reveals his Deep Interest in Religious Art,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (December 19, 1943); Riley, “Blumenthal Gifts on View at Metropolitan,” p. 5.

<sup>207</sup> Genauer, “Metropolitan Gets Blumenthal Collection.”

<sup>208</sup> “Collectors’ Choice, Brilliant Selection from Famous Collections, Will Inaugurate the New Permanent Special Exhibition Galleries,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art News For Release*, (November 8, 1957), p. 1.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1, 4.

Augustine, Margaret and Barbara,” were once again exhibited (and sold) alongside works of art previously belonging to prominent collectors and philanthropic donors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, including J. Pierpont Morgan, Michael Friedsam, and Benjamin Altman, at Christie’s in New York to benefit the Museum’s European Painting Acquisitions Fund.<sup>210</sup> Although these two paintings were originally part of the Blumenthal bequest to the Metropolitan Museum in 1941, the Museum ultimately decided to de-accession certain works that had been re-attributed since the time of their acquisition.<sup>211</sup>

The practice of organizing and presenting single owner exhibitions at American art institutions continues to this day and has endured various ethical debates over the years. While some major museums have restrictions that prevent these types of exhibitions, others, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, continue to exhibit private collections without fear of violating an ethics code or without any promise from the owners of a future donation, although most museums receive a gift in return.<sup>212</sup> One plausible explanation for this phenomenon is the traditional reliance of private American museums on the support and patronage of private donors and collectors who often bequeath a third to a half of a museum’s collection, in contrast to many public institutions in America and abroad that receive government assistance.<sup>213</sup> While these types of exhibitions also often flatter the ego of a living collector, the aim of the “Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal” exhibition was to celebrate the 1941 bequest of the recently deceased former president and bring his private collection to the attention of the public. It may also have been the Metropolitan Museum’s intention to influence or solicit his widow, Mary Ann Blumenthal, for future donations.

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<sup>210</sup> See “Renaissance,” Christie’s New York (January 29, 2014), lots 101 and 105. Both lots sold for more than their high estimate.

<sup>211</sup> The panel painting of *The Madonna and Child* by Jacopo del Sellaio, previously attributed to Filippo Lippi when acquired by George and Florence Blumenthal in New York, was already considered the work of one of his close contemporaries by the time it entered the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s collection. “Renaissance,” Christie’s New York (January 29, 2014), lot 101, pp. 8-11.

<sup>212</sup> Judith H. Dobrzynski, “Private Collections Routine at Museums,” *The New York Times on the Web* (October 1, 1999), <https://partners.nytimes.com/library/arts/100199museum-show.html?mcubz=1>. (accessed August 31, 2017)

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

Following the opening of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence for temporary exhibition, and the apparent public interest in the "Masterpieces" exhibition on Fifth Avenue, there was an outcry from the public who had visited the Blumenthal's residence to save it for perpetuity and have the collection returned to its original setting.<sup>214</sup> In a final attempt to prevent the destruction of the house, Mary Ann Blumenthal wrote a letter to the President and Board of Trustees of the Museum to clarify George Blumenthal's original intentions regarding the disposition of the house and proposed putting it to a useful purpose during a war.<sup>215</sup> Commissioner Robert Moses pursued the idea of establishing the Blumenthal house as a branch Museum, however he strongly believed that this proposition was contrary to George Blumenthal's Will.<sup>216</sup> In December 1944, as a last resort, Hunter College petitioned the Museum's Finance Committee to consider the sale of the land and present building to them for their own use, however this proposal was highly improbable as the college did not have the necessary funds.<sup>217</sup>

The Metropolitan Museum's annual expense for operating the Blumenthal property totaled \$15,000, including heat, electricity, insurance and security, in addition to \$2,400 per year for an engineer and \$1,000 for exhibition costs and incidentals.<sup>218</sup> Taxes on the property of a demolished building alone amounted to \$18,204 per year. In order for the property to remain tax-exempt, the Blumenthal house would need to be used for Museum purposes and for public display, not merely classified under the Museum's ownership.<sup>219</sup> The demolition cost of the house was estimated at \$20,000, not including the removal of the patio and other architectural elements for transfer to the Museum.

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<sup>214</sup> Both the Metropolitan Museum director, Francis Henry Taylor, and President, William Church Osborn, received letters from the public who had visited the Blumenthal's residence petitioning that it not be torn down after the war. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>215</sup> Mary Ann Blumenthal's letter is likely dated 1942. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> All estimated costs were based on figures from an engineer and prior employee of the Blumenthal's. Security at the Blumenthal house included two men during the day and two at night over a twenty-four-hour period. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>219</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

### Demolition of 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street

As a result of these costly overheads, the Metropolitan Museum hired the Albert A. Volk Company, a corporation engaged in the wrecking of buildings, to demolish the Blumenthal's four story Park Avenue limestone residence that commenced on August 15, 1945.<sup>220</sup> Prior to the demolition, the Museum privately sold certain remaining interior elements and equipment (non antique) from the Blumenthal house, including various decorative items, miscellaneous fixtures and other small select that it did not wish to keep to the New York dealer and decorating firm, French & Company, an established antiques and decorating firm who specialized in panelled interiors during this period.<sup>221</sup> The Museum also decided to sell a number of objects included in the Blumenthal bequest that were not deemed museum quality and invited Mitchell Samuels, co-founder of French & Company, to assist and advise.<sup>222</sup> A complete list of objects recommended for sale was compiled in 1945.<sup>223</sup> The Museum ultimately sold the Blumenthal property to 422 West 29<sup>th</sup> Street Corporation for \$307,000 in January 1946 to make way for a residential apartment building that still stands today.<sup>224</sup>

The removal of the structural elements of the Vélez Blanco Patio from the Blumenthal residence proved quite a challenge for the workmen and Museum staff involved, and subsequent documents reported that the added cost and difficulty was a result of the integration of the applied ornaments into the actual structure of the house, particularly in the arcade and staircase. Former Metropolitan Museum president, Francis Henry Taylor, even recounted that “[h]ad the Museum not been specifically instructed under Mr. Blumenthal's will to remove, transport and store against future reconstruction the

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<sup>220</sup> Katherine C. Moore, “Trowbridge & Livingston Research Files, 1892-2010, Box 1,” Avery Library, Department of Architectural Drawings and Archives, Columbia University; “Blumenthal Home Under Demolition,” *New York Times* (August 16, 1945).

<sup>221</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>222</sup> News Clippings and Ephemera Collection, MMA Archives, Box 41 “Exhibitions: Press Clippings, 1943-44,” Folder 2, Blumenthal Collection, 1943.

<sup>223</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives 2.

<sup>224</sup> Museum archives make reference to real estate developer, Samuel Minskoff, purchasing the Blumenthal property on January 30, 1945. Following the cost of real estate taxes, the operating expenses for the past three years, and dismantling charges, the net balance of the sale of the Blumenthal property was approximately \$165,000. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives; “The Talk of the Town,” *The New Yorker* (February 6, 1965), p. 24.

architectural elements of the house, I should have had hesitancy in recommending our doing so.”<sup>225</sup>

The demolition of the Blumenthal residence, referred to as “one of the most spectacular private homes in...[New York] city,” occurred during a time when a number of nearby Gilded Age mansions on the Upper East Side of Manhattan were also being torn down to make way for new skyscrapers, high rise apartment buildings, and department stores.<sup>226</sup> Few of these grand mansions survived into the latter half of the twentieth century, illustrating a shift away from the commission of such elaborate mansions by new money industrialists who wished to demonstrate their ambition and success to a new modern age.

#### Afterlife of the Blumenthal Collection

Following the death of George Blumenthal in 1941, Mary Ann Blumenthal assumed the role of steward for George and Florence’s collection, and ultimately served, whether deliberately or not, as the ambassador for the estate. Similar to Florence Blumenthal, Mary Ann was considered a fashionable woman of the day and was equally dedicated to supporting philanthropic organizations in New York, including the United Hospital Fund and Lisa Day Nursery.<sup>227</sup> One gossip column in London reported “[t]he lady who the gossips insist will become the second Mrs. Blumenthal is very well known in Gotham’s social-literary circles...she’s very clever and very handsome, and ought to make Mr. Blumenthal a perfect wife.”<sup>228</sup> While she was not a collector or museum patron at the time of her marriage to George Blumenthal, he encouraged her to study the history of art

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<sup>225</sup> George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>226</sup> “Collectors’ Choice, Brilliant Selection from Famous Collections, Will Inaugurate the New Permanent Special Exhibition Galleries,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art News For Release*, (November 8, 1957), p. 4.

<sup>227</sup> Mary Ann Payne was the widow of James Blanchard Clews (1844-1934), head of the banking firm Henry Clews & Co. “Mrs. James B. Clews Married Here to George Blumenthal,” MMA Medieval Records.

<sup>228</sup> It was also reported that “[n]o announcement of the engagement was made, and news of the marriage will come as a surprise to a wide circle of friends in society and art circles here and abroad.” “Mrs. James B. Clews Married Here to George Blumenthal,” MMA Medieval Records; Mme. Flutterbye, “In Mayfair” (1943?).

and she soon became an avid collector of fine lace that she later donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>229</sup>

Mary Ann Blumenthal was interested in the latest fashions and identified herself as a collector of textiles.<sup>230</sup> She was also one of the first women to donate contemporary haute couture garments from the previous season from her wardrobe, including designer sketches, to both the Metropolitan Museum of Art and to the Museum of the City of New York, an extremely forward-thinking and early example of costume donation for the period.<sup>231</sup> Some of these donations included garments worn to high-profile events overseas while married to George Blumenthal, including a garden party hosted by the French government in honor of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth at Bagatelle in 1938 and an Opera given for the royals, a testament to the level of social entrée both she and George Blumenthal were surrounded by during this period.<sup>232</sup> Watercolor sketches of daywear and evening designs donated by Mary Ann Blumenthal to the Museum of the City of New York demonstrate that she was also an avid client of French designer, Madeleine Vionnet (1876-1975). (See Fig. 117)

In recognition for her gifts and support to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mary Ann Blumenthal was elected Benefactor in 1936 and a Fellow in Perpetuity in 1939.<sup>233</sup> In addition, she participated in the distribution of millions of dollars to public and private

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<sup>229</sup> Arthur R. Blumenthal, p. 9.

<sup>230</sup> Mrs. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>231</sup> Beginning in 1938, Mary Ann Blumenthal was in communication with Frances Little, then Associate Curator of Textiles at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to confirm Blumenthal's plans to save one dress per season, or else one per year, for donation to the Museum. Often communication about a garment's donation took place weeks prior to the event when the dress was worn. Mrs. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>232</sup> Mrs. George Blumenthal files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. nos. 41.108.1-7, 39.71.2); Museum of the City of New York (inv. nos. 39.550.5, 38.215.9, 40.243.1-2); correspondence with Phyllis Magidson, Curator of Costumes and Textiles at the MCNY, October 3, 2014, and William DeGregario, October 16, 2014. Between 1938-1940, Mary Ann Blumenthal donated four garments to the Museum of the City of New York, comprising ensembles by Madeleine Vionnet and Jeanne Paquin. According to Phyllis Magidson, surviving pieces of Vionnet daywear are extremely rare today. According to DeGregario, Mary Ann Blumenthal donated top of the line (and costly) haute couture garments of the period to the MCNY, complete with accessories from the best milliners and glovers.

<sup>233</sup> See "Annual Report of the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," no. 67 (1936), p. 4; Annual Report of the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 70 (1939), p. 4.

philanthropies, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and St. Vincent's Hospital, and was also a member of the French Legion of Honor.<sup>234</sup>

Following George Blumenthal, Mary Ann remarried two more times, the first in 1943 to General Ralph Kenyon Robertson (1883-1964), followed by former Russian cavalry officer, Baron Charles Phillip von Wrangell-Rokassowsky (1896-1987) in 1969, thus becoming a Baroness.<sup>235</sup> General and Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson resided at 4 East 66<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City, replete with eighteenth-century French decorative arts, many of the pieces previously in the collection of George and Florence Blumenthal.<sup>236</sup> In 1944, Mary Ann Robertson consigned several pieces from George Blumenthal's collection at auction, presumably as a result of her recent re-marriage, including English and French furniture, brocade panels and velvet hangings, ceramics, silver, and glassware.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> "Baroness, 84, Benefactor of St. Vincent's Hospital," *The New York Times* (September 19, 1973).

<sup>235</sup> General Robertson was originally from Buffalo, New York and had a long career as a distinguished lawyer and soldier in the New York National Guard and in the Army. In 1936, he was the unsuccessful Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor of New York. He attended Cornell University, obtaining a law degree in 1908. While at college, he served in the cadet corps and received a commission in the old 74th Infantry of the National Guard upon graduation. "Maj. Gen. Ralph K. Robertson, Lawyer and Soldier, Dies at 81," *The New York Times* (October 6, 1964) [http://www.nytimes.com/1964/10/06/maj-gen-ralph-k-robertson-lawyer-and-soldier-dies-at-81.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/1964/10/06/maj-gen-ralph-k-robertson-lawyer-and-soldier-dies-at-81.html?_r=0); "Mrs. Blumenthal is Wed to General," *The New York Times*, Marriage Collection, 1943; "Baroness, 84, Benefactor of St. Vincent's Hospital," *The New York Times* (September 19, 1973); "Blumenthal, Mary Ann Payne Clews." *The Frick Collection* (Archives Directory for the History of Collecting in America), (accessed September 9, 2018), <http://research.frick.org/directoryweb/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=6935>.

<sup>236</sup> "Living with Antiques, The New York Apartment of General and Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson," *Magazine Antiques* (January 1961), pp. 84-87. In 1942, Mary Ann Blumenthal, expressed her desire to keep some of the objects that George Blumenthal had bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in his Will and suggested that the Museum sell them back to her for the sum of \$1. News Clippings an Ephemera Collection, MMA Archives, Box 41 "Exhibitions: Press Clippings, 1943-44," Folder 2, Blumenthal Collection, 1943.

<sup>237</sup> Just three years after his death, George Blumenthal's name still held special significance as a prominent collector. See "English and French Furniture...All from Private Owners and Estates Including Property of Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson from the Collection of the Late George Blumenthal...", Parke-Bernet Galleries Inc. (New York, January 21-22, 1944).

On select occasions, Mary Ann Robertson opened her home and collection to hundreds of paying visitors for charity and it was noted that she took “very seriously the responsibilities of her great wealth and the priceless collection that is in her charge.”<sup>238</sup> Similar to the *Town & Country* article on George and Florence’s New York mansion and collection published in 1930, the Robertson’s home was photographed and featured in *Magazine Antiques* in 1961, highlighting the couple’s taste for French furniture, tapestries, sculpture, porcelain, paintings, and drawings.<sup>239</sup> Like Florence Blumenthal, Mary Ann also had a similar passion for French royal furniture and created a small salon known as the “Marie Antoinette room” to showcase a number of pieces furniture belonging to the French Queen that previously furnished Florence’s sitting and dressing rooms on Park Avenue.<sup>240</sup> (See Fig. 118) Like Marie Antoinette, Mary Ann Robertson even embroidered her own upholstery for pieces of English furniture.<sup>241</sup>

Between 1962-1966, Mary Ann Robertson continued to support the Metropolitan Museum of Art, donating eleven pieces of nineteenth-century French porcelain made by the Sèvres manufactory in 1962, as well as a grouping of French furniture in 1964 (purchased by George and Florence), all under the title “Gift of Mary Ann Payne Foundation Inc.,” effectively diminishing the memory of George and Florence.<sup>242</sup> In 1966, she signed a Deed of Gift renouncing her life estate in any remaining works of art left to her by George Blumenthal that were ultimately promised to the Metropolitan Museum of Art after her death.<sup>243</sup> She also established a Museum fund to finance the costs of travelling loan exhibitions to smaller institutions.<sup>244</sup> Following the renunciation

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<sup>238</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art drafted a list of objects desired for eventual acquisition from the Robertson’s residence on East 66<sup>th</sup> Street. James Rorimer Records, MMA Archives, Box 10, Folders 15-16.

<sup>239</sup> For more information on the Robertson’s collection and residence, see “Living with Antiques, The New York Apartment of General and Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson,” *Magazine Antiques* (January 1961), pp. 84-87.

<sup>240</sup> “Living with Antiques, The New York Apartment of General and Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson,” *Magazine Antiques* (January 1961), p. 87.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> According to Museum records, any gifts received from Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson on or after September 23, 1959 were to be recorded as a gift from the Mary Ann Payne Foundation, Inc. Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson files, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*



of her life interest, Mary Ann Robertson continued to sell a number of pieces of eighteenth-century French and English furniture and silver from the estate of the late George Blumenthal (not destined for the Metropolitan Museum of Art) in a series of consecutive auctions in New York.<sup>245</sup> Although there is little evidence to support her motivation for these sales, the timing would suggest that Mary Ann donated the proceeds to the Museum fund.

### Conclusion

It was the Blumenthal's original intent to transform their Park Avenue mansion into an extension of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the designing of the house and collecting of works of art ensued accordingly. Following George Blumenthal's decision to alter his Will and allow the Museum to demolish the house and absorb a substantial portion of the collection after his death, a significant transfer of architectural elements and works of art resulted over the following decades in a final effort to achieve the Blumenthal's ultimate goal of public engagement with the collection and educational role.

The Blumenthal bequest was among one of the most significant gifts the Metropolitan Museum of Art of the twentieth century. While it was not the first bequest from a Jewish donor or from a board President, it was, however, the first that had been assembled by husband and wife team. It is surprising that such a substantial donation encompassing a wide array of materials and spanning many centuries has not been studied more closely since the publication of the collection catalogue in 1930 and that the identity of its owners has been somewhat diminished at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As works of art from the collection have been divided among different curatorial departments and distributed throughout various European galleries, including the reserves, the Blumenthal Patio serves as the surviving glimpse of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence and their legacy in New York.

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<sup>245</sup> See Parke-Bernet Galleries New York sale catalogues (April 29, 1966; May 14, 1966; June 3, 1966; and September 17, 1966).

## Conclusion

Through an analysis of the life, collections, and philanthropy of banker, George Blumenthal (1858-1941), and his first wife, Florence Meyer (1873-1930), this thesis has established the importance of their collecting partnership in America and France at the end of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. I have illustrated that while the Blumenthals created a collecting partnership, each maintained their own collecting incentives and goals as a result of their different family backgrounds. For George, collecting provided a sense of identity and represented a method of assimilation and acceptance amidst a competitive and anti-Semitic environment in New York. For Florence, collecting served as a catalyst for her philanthropic endeavors, including the founding of a new foundation to support young, contemporary artists.

I have demonstrated that both George and Florence Blumenthal built their homes and installed their collections with the public in mind and their collecting ultimately served as a springboard to support cultural institutions and fulfill a public educational role. I have established that Florence Blumenthal played a leading role in the formation of the collection and construction and design of the houses on both sides of the Atlantic. This occurred during a pivotal moment in American history when women became more independent and were granted the right to vote. From the beginning, the Blumenthals envisioned their Park Avenue house as an extension of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After Florence's death, George donated the architectural elements from their Gothic room in Paris to the Cloisters for integration in a new museum. The Spanish patio from Vélez Blanco and the Gothic room were not simply transformed into period rooms integrated into these institutions, but serve as architectural foundations integrated into the very structures of the buildings.

This thesis has contributed to the growing body of knowledge on collecting in America through the evaluation of a collecting partnership that has not yet been evaluated in its entirety. It builds upon the growing discipline with unpublished archival research, providing a broader context for this important episode in collecting history. This thesis

has also placed George and Florence Blumenthal in the context of other collectors in the United States and Europe during this period in order to demonstrate their contributions to the history of collecting and determine that J.P. Morgan and Isabella Stewart Gardner played a significant role in guiding their collecting and decorating.

Finally, I have illustrated that the Blumenthals became pioneering philanthropists through their donations to cultural institutions that remain of supreme value to the public today. Through their bequest of their Park Avenue house and its contents before 1720, the Blumenthal's legacy remains alive at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as well as in Paris through donations to French museums, including the Louvre and Decorative Arts Museums, plaques and named pavilions at libraries and hospitals, and city streets and squares named after Florence.

While the Blumenthals were by no means the only collecting couple during this period, they were part of a generation that focused on their legacy, philanthropy, and the formation of museum collections rather than using their homes and collection purely for display and entertainment. They were part of an important shift from the Gilded Age decadence to donors and benefactors of American museums.

Since the Blumenthal bequest, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has received several large gifts from private collectors, some of which from husband and wife couples, such Robert Lehman (1969), Irwin Untermyer (1973), Jack and Belle Linsky (1982), Iris and B. Gerald Cantor (1987), Jayne and Charles Wrightsman (1988), and Leonard Lauder (2013).<sup>1</sup> As the Metropolitan Museum of Art approaches the one hundred and fifty year anniversary of its founding, it continues to organize private collection exhibitions honouring such bequests. The example of the Blumenthals will hopefully inspire the

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<sup>1</sup> Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide, Wolfram Koeppe, and William Rieder, European Furniture in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Highlights from the Collection (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 3-6.

future study of other collecting partnerships in the history of collecting for the next one hundred and fifty years.

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## Appendices

Figure 1:  
Florence Blumenthal, 1920s. Photographic print preserved in the George and Florence Blumenthal Scrapbook. Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 2:

Marc Eugene Meyer (1842-1925), known as Eugene, Los Angeles, 1860s. The Jewish Museum of the American West <http://www.jmaw.org/meyer-jewish-los-angeles/>





Figure 3:  
Rabbi Jacob Meyer of Strasbourg, Eugene Meyer's paternal grandfather.  
<http://judaisme.sdv.fr/histoire/rabbins/jmeyer/jmeyer.htm>



Fig. 4a:

Solomon Lazard's Store, Bell's Row, Los Angeles, 1850s. The Jewish Museum of the American West.



Figure 4b:

Eugene Meyer's City of Paris store, Los Angeles, 1890s. The Jewish Museum of the American West. [www.jmaw.org/eugene-meyer-jewish-los-angeles/](http://www.jmaw.org/eugene-meyer-jewish-los-angeles/)



Figure 5:  
Eugene Meyer and Harriet Newark on their wedding day, November 1867, Los Angeles.  
Library of Congress, Pints & Photographs.



Figure 6:  
Joseph and Rosa Newmark and family. The Jewish Museum of the American West.  
<http://www.jmaw.org/newmark-jewish-los-angeles-2/>.



Figure 7:

The Meyers family photographed in San Francisco in the early 1880s. Florence Meyer (1873-1930) is seated in front. Irena Narell, Our City, The Jews of San Francisco (San Diego, California: Howell North Books, 1981), p. 347.





Figure 8:  
Rosalie Meyer Stern (1869-1956). Judah Magnus Museum, University of California  
Berkeley.



Figure 9:  
Sigmund Stern, Rosalie Meyer Stern, and daughter Elise Stern. Judah Magnes Museum,  
University of California Berkeley.





Figure 10:  
Suite of dining room furniture by Armand-Albert Rateau, 1930. Fine Arts Museums of  
San Francisco (inv. no. 1986.86.1-.8).



Figure 11:

Photograph by Ansel Adams of Diego Rivera painting the fresco “Still Life and Blossoming Almond Trees (1930-1931), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 12:  
Eugene Meyer Jr. (1875-1959). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs.



Figure 13:

Agnes Ernst Meyer photographed by Edward Steichen, about 1915. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston © 2014 The Estate of Edward Steichen / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Figure 14:

Eugene Meyer and family photographed by Edward Steichen, about 1926. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution © The Estate of Edward Steichen / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY.

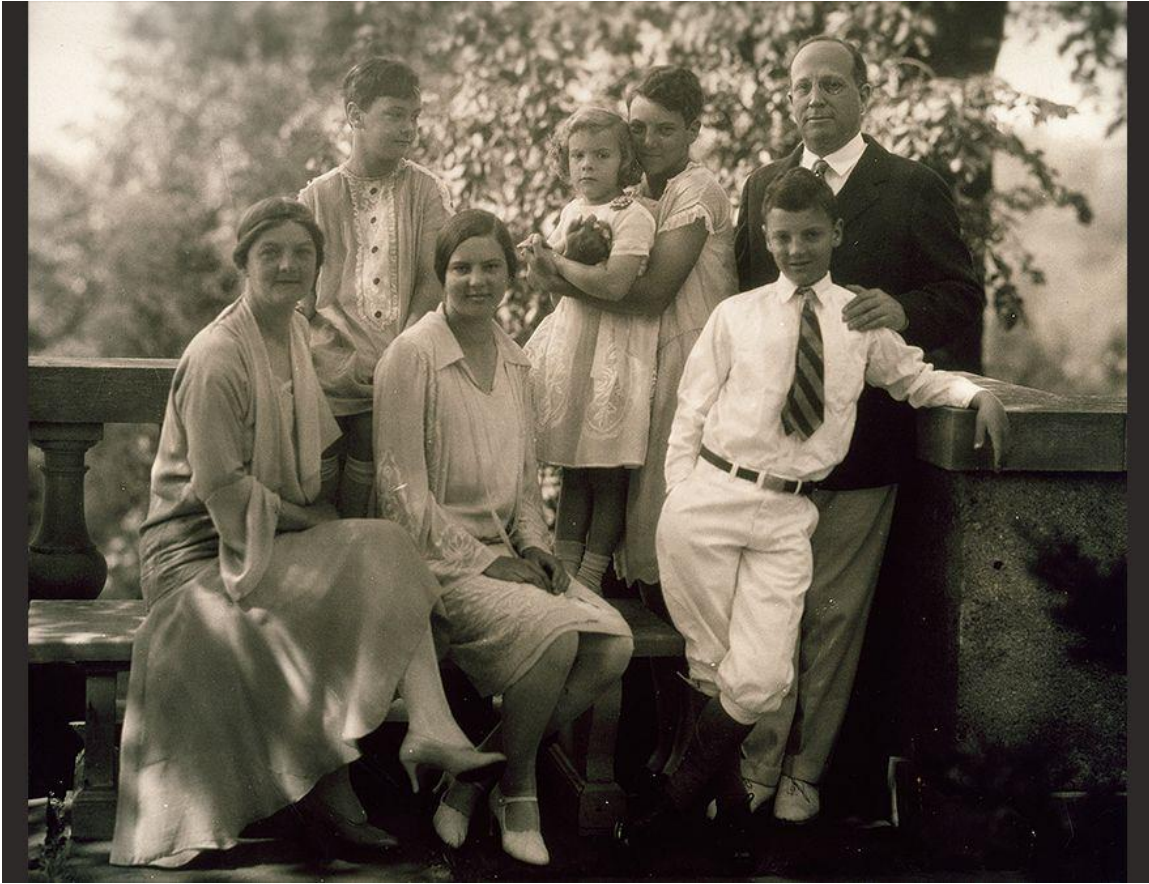




Figure 15:

Aline Liebman's Fifth Avenue apartment, illustrating the Degas' *Little Fourteen-Year Old Dancer* presented by George and Florence Blumenthal. Margaret Liebman Berger, Aline Meyer Liebman, Pioneer Collector and Artist (Canandaigua, N.Y.: W.F. Humphrey Press, 1982), Fig. 24.



Figure 16:  
Portrait of Aline Meyer Liebman by Stefan Hirsch, 1927. The Jewish Museum, New York (inv. no. 1993-194).



Figure 17:

Aline M. Liebman exhibition at San Francisco Museum of Art (today SFMOMA), 1937.  
Caitlin Haskell, "Currents within a Collection: Aline M. Liebman," (May 28, 2013).

<https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2013/05/haas-series-4/>.





Figure 18:  
George Blumenthal (1858-1941). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs.



Figure 19:

Paperwork documenting Hermann Blumenthal's request for citizenship and permission to settle in the city of Frankfurt as a merchant with his new wife, Helene Stiebel, on March 16, 1852. Frankfurt City Archives.

III. <sup>Q 50,</sup> <sup>prats. 3. 16. März 1852.</sup>  
 An  
 Josef Carrst  
 hiesigen Rath Frankfurt  
 Gehörigster Gehör  
 in  
 Aufnahm in das hiesige  
 Bürgerrecht  
 mit  
 in Befestigung der der  
 Gehörig  
 von Seiten  
 des Hermann Blumenthal  
 Ehegattens mit Anna,  
 Ehefrau im Großherzog-  
 thum Hessen.  
 Supplikanten  
 Sollen wir Gehörig  
 der Aufnahm in das  
 hies. Bürgerrecht als  
 Familienvater mit  
 Befestigung der hiesi-  
 gen Bürgerrechte  
 in Bezug auf Helene Stiebel  
 befragt.  
 Josef Carrst will  
 Gehörigster Gehör,  
 nachstehendes sperren  
 in Bezug auf hiesige  
 Aufnahm in das hiesige  
 Bürgerrecht.  
 Mit  
 18. Februar 1852 [1.]

Figure 20a:  
Photograph of Florence Blumenthal and George Blumenthal Jr., about 1908. G. & F. B.  
Scrapbook.



Figure 20b:  
Photograph of George Blumenthal and George Blumenthal Jr., about 1908. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs.



Figure 20c:  
Photograph of George Blumenthal Jr., about 1908. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs.





Figure 21:  
The Blumenthal Auditorium, Mount Sinai Hospital, New York. Icahn School of  
Medicine at Mount Sinai Archives, New York.



Figure 23:

“Historical Exhibit” organized in honor of George Blumenthal’s eightieth birthday and forty-sixth year as President of Mount Sinai Hospital, 1938. Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Archives, New York.

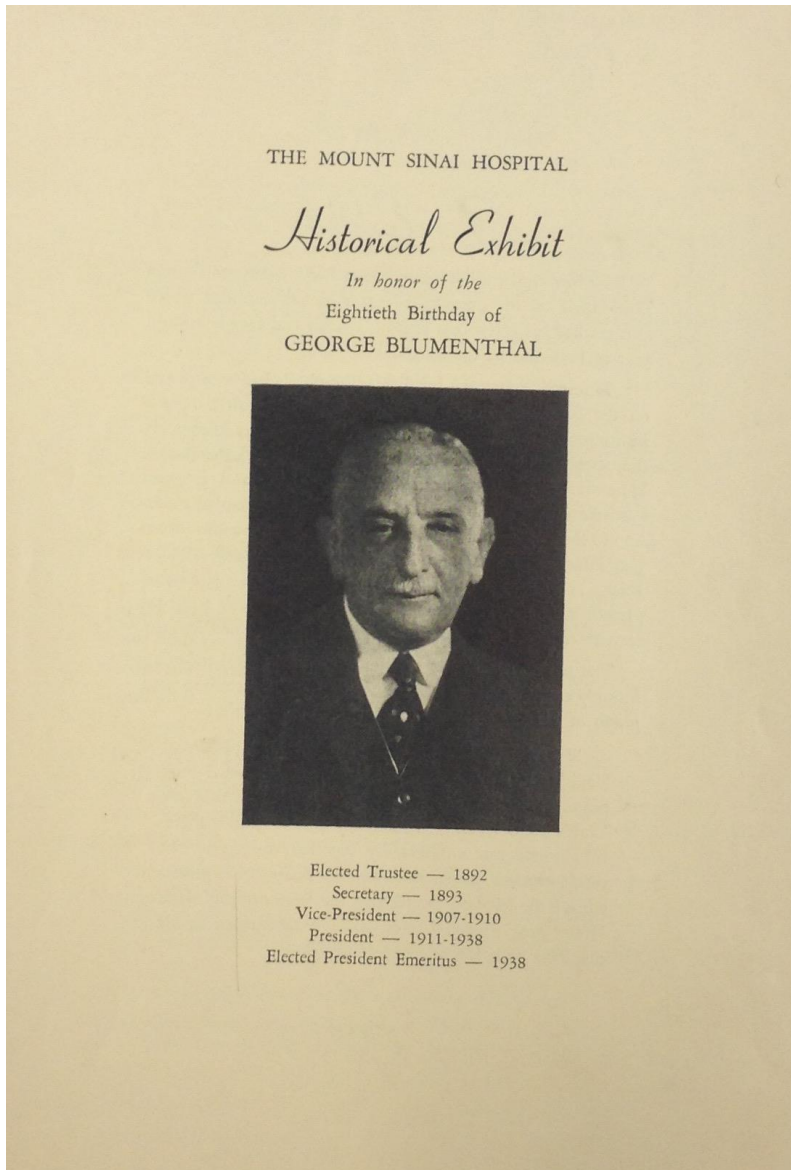


Figure 24:

The October 1932 issue of The Mount Sinai Hospital Bulletin featuring George Blumenthal on the front page. Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Archives, New York.

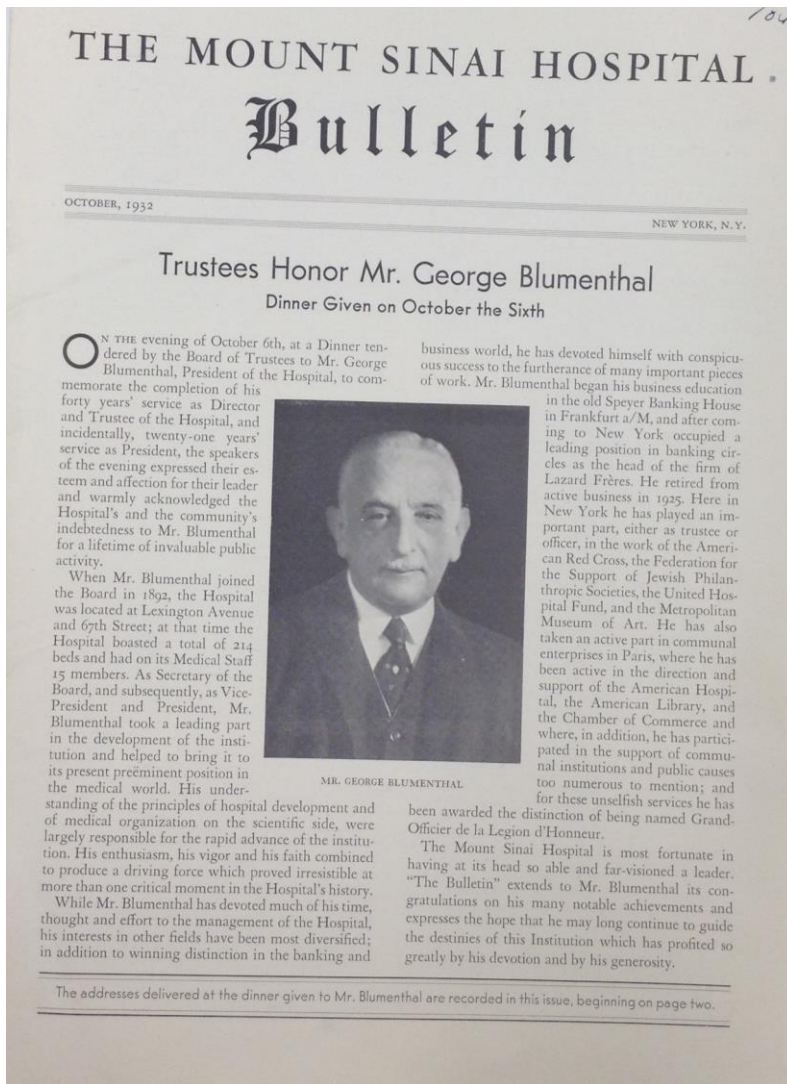




Figure 25:  
Portrait of George Blumenthal by Maxwell B. Starr. Mount Sinai Hospital, New York.



Figure 26:  
Bronze bust of George Blumenthal by Paul Landowski, 1919. Mount Sinai Hospital, New York.



Figure 27:  
Pen drawing of George Blumenthal as the “Wizard of European Securities, c. 1905.  
G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

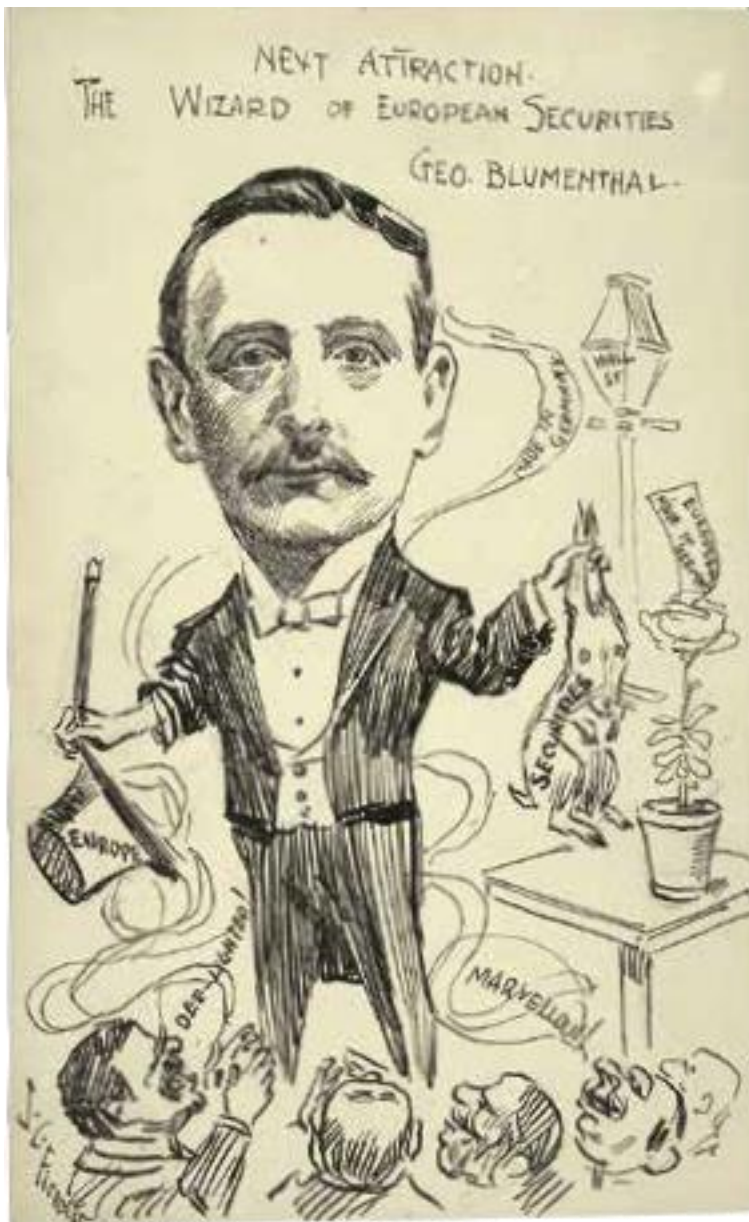




Figure 28a:

Newspaper clipping announcing the inauguration of the new surgical pavilion at the Necker Children's Hospital, Paris, funded by George and Florence Blumenthal in 1926.  
G. & F. B. Scrapbook.



Figure 28b:

Newspaper clipping illustrating the George and Florence Blumenthal pavilion at the Necker Children's Hospital, Paris, 1926. G. & F. B. Scrapbook.



Figure 28c:

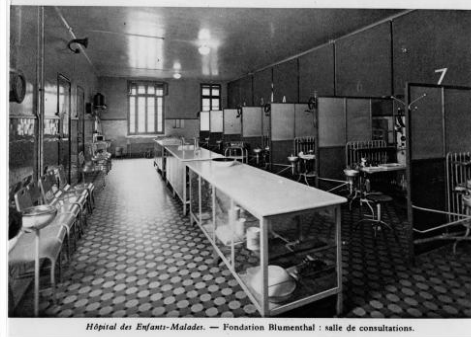
Photograph of George and Florence Blumenthal visiting the new pavilion at the Necker Children's Hospital, Paris, 1926. G. & F. B. Scrapbook.



Figure 28d:  
Blumenthal Foundation rooms, Necker Children's Hospital, Paris, 1930-1937. Archives  
de l'AP-HP, Paris.



3Fi4NECKER\_0625  
Blumenthal (fondation).  
Salle d'attente de la consultation  
(1900).



Hôpital des Enfants-Malades. — Fondation Blumenthal : salle de consultations.

3Fi4NECKER\_0817  
Fondation Blumenthal.  
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(1930).



Hôpital des Enfants-Malades. — Fondation Blumenthal : cure de soleil.

3Fi4NECKER\_0847  
Fondation Blumenthal.  
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(1937).



3Fi4NECKER\_1284  
Blumenthal (fondation).  
Salle commune  
(1931).





3Fi4NECKER\_1285  
Blumenthal (fondation).  
Salle d'oxygénothérapie  
(1931).



3Fi4NECKER\_1286  
Blumenthal (fondation).  
Salle d'oxygénothérapie  
(1931).



3Fi4NECKER\_2852  
Blumenthal (fondation).  
Episcopes de la salle de bronchoscophagoscopie  
(1931).



Figure 29:

Donor plaque in the Mazarine Gallery at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris honoring Florence Blumenthal's donation in 1927 for the restoration.



Figure 30

Armchair made by Michel Gourdin, Paris, 1760-1765, gilded beech, Savonnerie, donated by George and Florence Blumenthal to the Louvre Museum, Paris (OA 8093).



Figure 31

Chinese-style “screen” clock, made by Maurice Couët for Cartier, Paris, 1927, with white jade, coral, onyx, emeralds sapphires, enamelled gold, mother-of-pearl, diamonds. Given by George Blumenthal, 1931. Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (inv. 27898).



Figure 32

Egyptian Striking Clock, Cartier Paris, 1927. Gold, silver-gilt, mother-of-pearl, emerald, cornelian, enamel, lapis-lazuli, polychrome and white enamel.

Acquired in New York by Florence Blumenthal in 1929. Private collection.





Figure 33:  
Rue Florence Blumenthal street sign, sixteenth district, Paris.



Figure 34a:  
Virgin and Child, Normandy, early sixteenth century, painted stone.  
Louvre Museum, Paris (2201A).

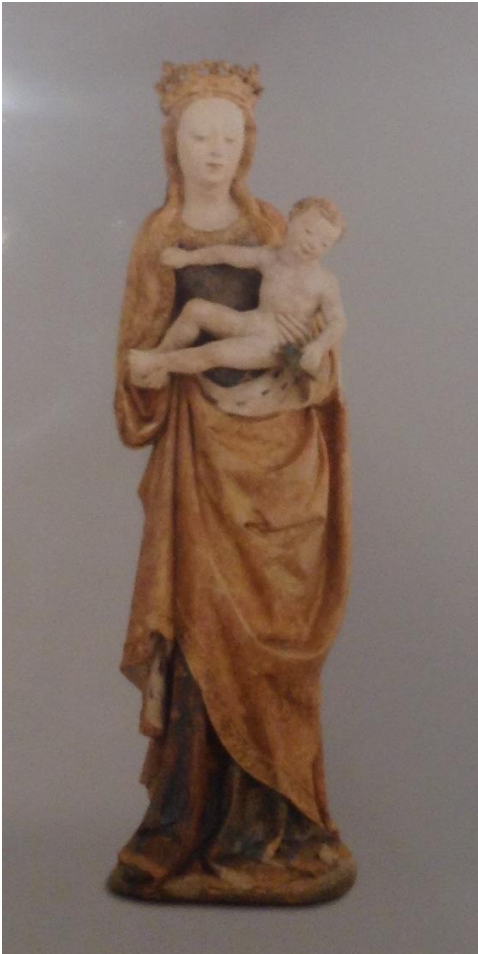


Figure 34b:

Bas-relief depicting two figures underneath an arcade, France, first half of the fifteenth century, stone. Louvre Museum, Paris (RF 2202).



Figure 34c:  
Head of a woman, Normandy, around 1500, stone. Louvre Museum, Paris (inv. no. 2203).





Figure 35:

Photograph of the fifteenth-century door from the hôtel Coeffiers d'Effiat in Gannat, purchased by the Blumenthals for the Gothic room in 1920. Conserved today in the Louvre Museum, Paris (inv. no. 2389). "Notice sur les Fragments de Monuments Anciens Ayant Servi à Construire la Salle de Musique de l'Hôtel du 15 Boulevard de Montmorency à Paris" (Paris: Les Editions Albert Lévy, 1930).



Figure 36:

George Blumenthal's Legion of Honor award Officer in 1929 for his activity as patron of the arts and for his support to philanthropic organizations. G. & F. B. Scrapbook.

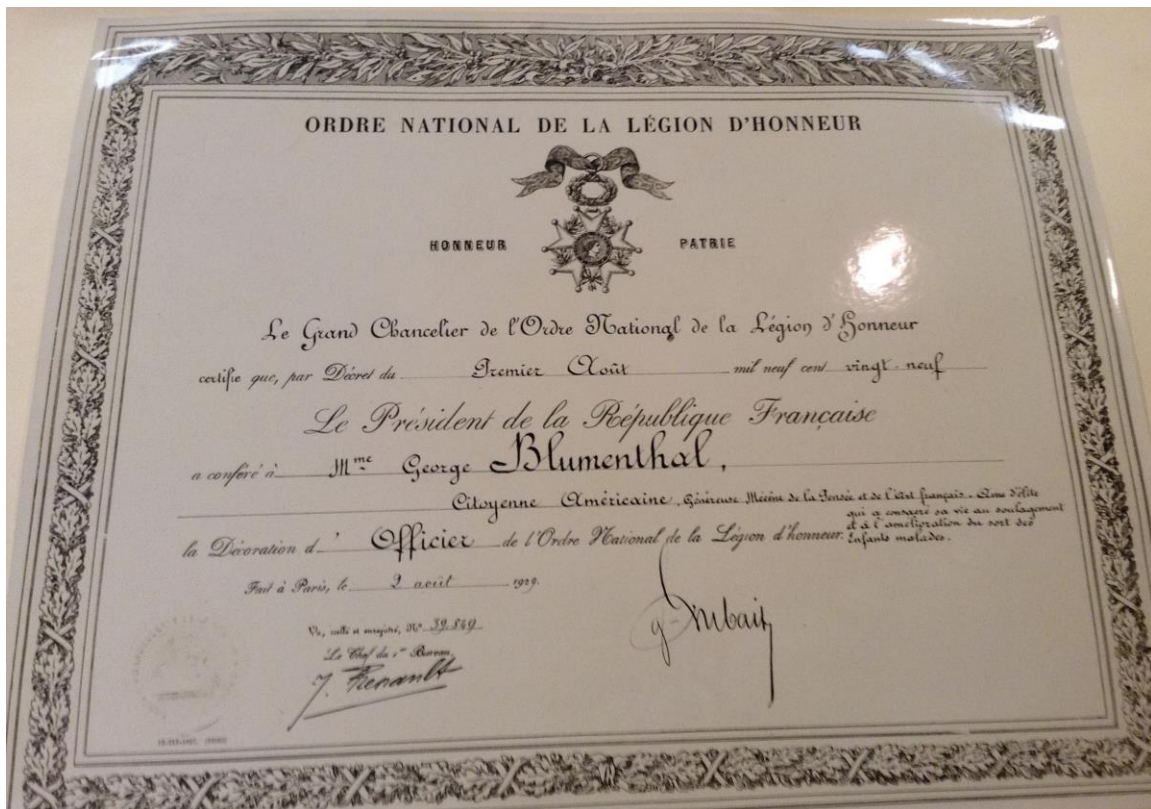


Figure 37a:  
Seated portrait of Florence Blumenthal by Giovanni Boldini, 1896. Musée d'Orsay, Paris,  
on deposit to French Embassy, Vienna.





Figure 37b:  
Photograph of the Boldini portrait of Florence Blumenthal at the French Embassy,  
Vienna.



Figure 38a:

Full-length portrait of Florence Blumenthal by Giovanni Boldini, 1912. Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.876).



Figure 38b:  
Preparatory sketch of Florence Blumenthal by Boldini, 1912. Library of Congress, Prints  
& Photographs.



Figure 39:  
Portrait of Florence Blumenthal by Jean Dunand, 1927. Private Collection. Félix  
Marcilhac, Jean Dunand: vie et oeuvre (fig. 150).

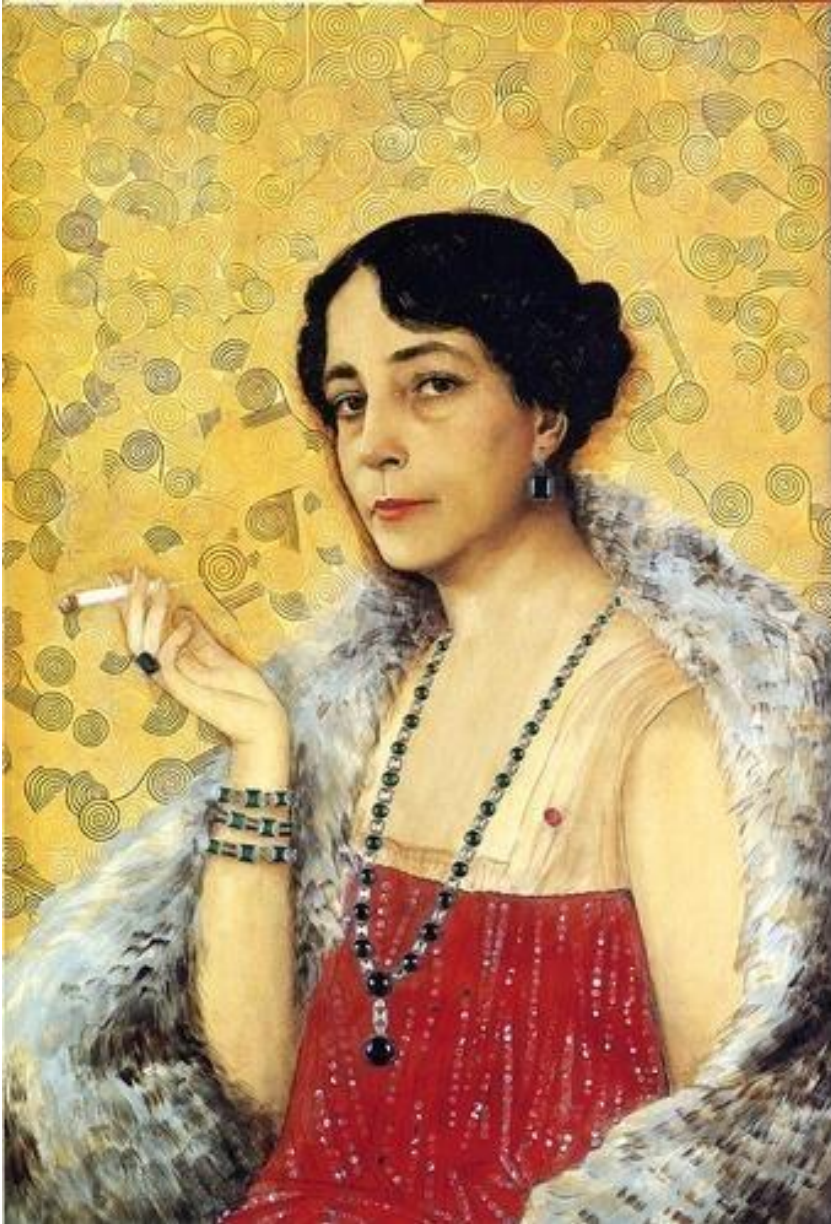




Figure 40:

Florence Blumenthal (1873-1930) in the Library at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street by Adolf de Meyer. Department of Photographs, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (41.71.6).





Figure 41:  
Portrait of George Blumenthal by Charles Hopkinson, 1933.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 33.154).



Figure 42:  
Marble bust of George Blumenthal by Paul-Maximilien Landowski, 1920.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. no. 43.112).

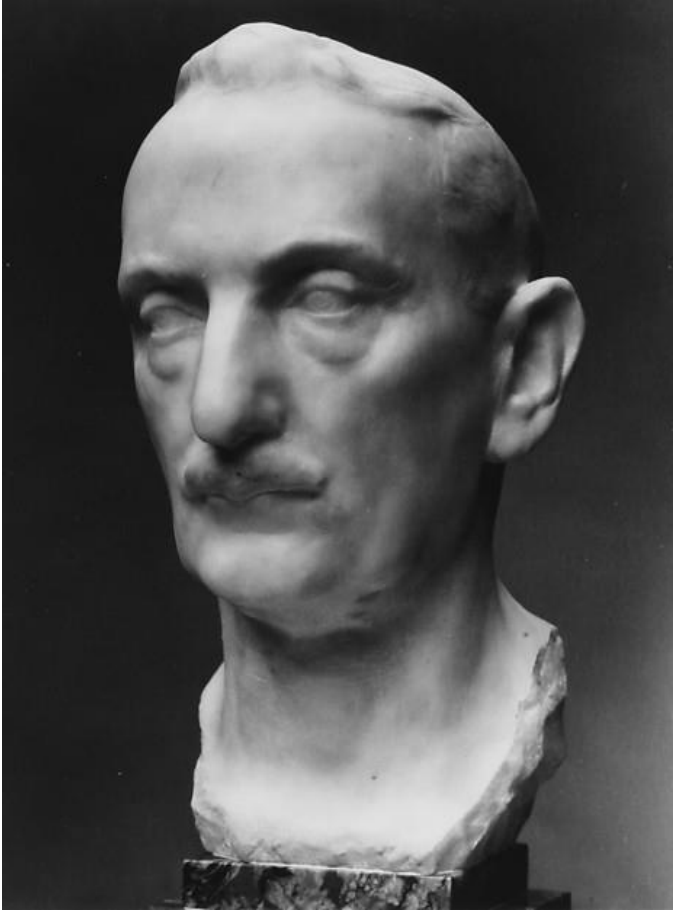


Figure 43:  
Marble bust of Florence Blumenthal by Paul Landowski, 1923  
Avery Library, Columbia University, New York (inv. no. 68.10).



Figure 44:  
Plaster model of Florence Blumenthal by Paul Landowski, 1920 or 1921.  
Musée des Années 30, Boulogne-Bilancourt (1991.2.14).



Figure 45a:

Knollwood's two-storey boathouse.

Harvey H. Kaiser, Great Camps of the Adirondacks (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982), p. 142.





Figure 45b:

One of the six two-and-a-half-storey Victorian shingle cottages with twig work facades. Harvey H. Kaiser, Great Camps of the Adirondacks (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982), p. 143.



Figure 45c:

Interior view of one of the living rooms at Knollwood.

Harvey H. Kaiser, Great Camps of the Adirondacks (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982), p. 141.



Figure 46a:  
The Blumenthal House, 23 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, New York.  
Christopher Gray, "With a Museum for a Neighbor," *New York Times* (May 2, 2013).

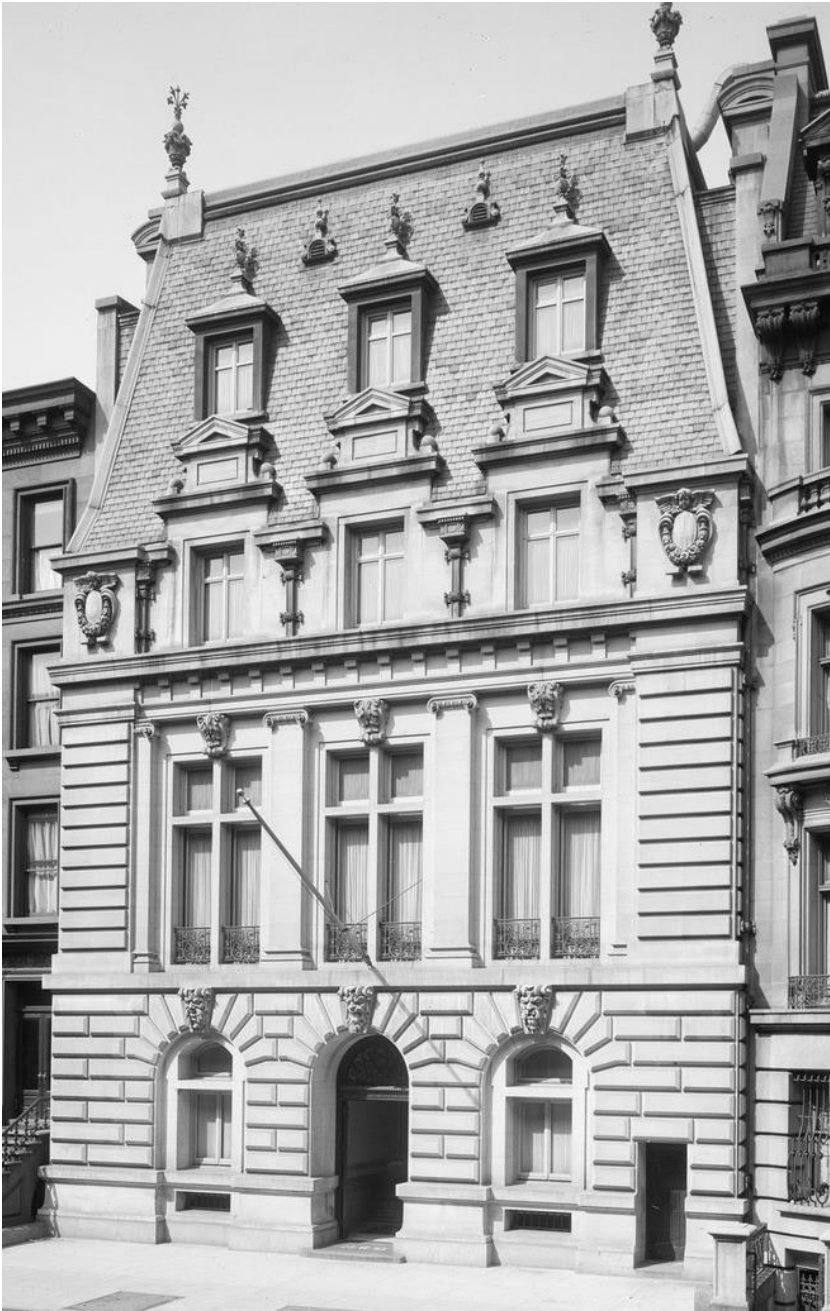




Figure 46b:  
Architectural details of the stonework façade of the Blumenthal's residence at 23 West  
53<sup>rd</sup> Street. Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.



Figure 46c:



Figure 46d:



Figure 47:

Photograph of the Blumenthal House, 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, about 1915.  
Museum of the City of New York (X2010.11.14133).





Figure 48:  
Photograph of the Union Theological Seminary, between 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> Streets, New  
York, about 1895. Museum of the City of New York (93.1.1.2325).



Figure 49:

Photograph of the Arthur Curtiss James House, East 69<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Avenue, New York, about 1917. Museum of the City of New York (X2010.7.1.2317).



Figure 50a:

Four Stages of construction of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue Residence by builders Marc Eidlitz & Son between May-August, 1912.

New York Public Library, Photographs of Buildings under Construction, 1901-1935.





Figure 50b:





Figure 50c:



Figure 50d:



Figure 51:

Sketch of the façade of the Blumenthal Park Avenue House, 1934, private collection.

Michael C. Kathrens, Great Houses of New York, 1880-1930, v. 1 (New York: Acanthus Press, 2005), p. 295.



Figure 52:  
First-floor plan of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence. Office of the Secretary  
Records, MMA Archives.

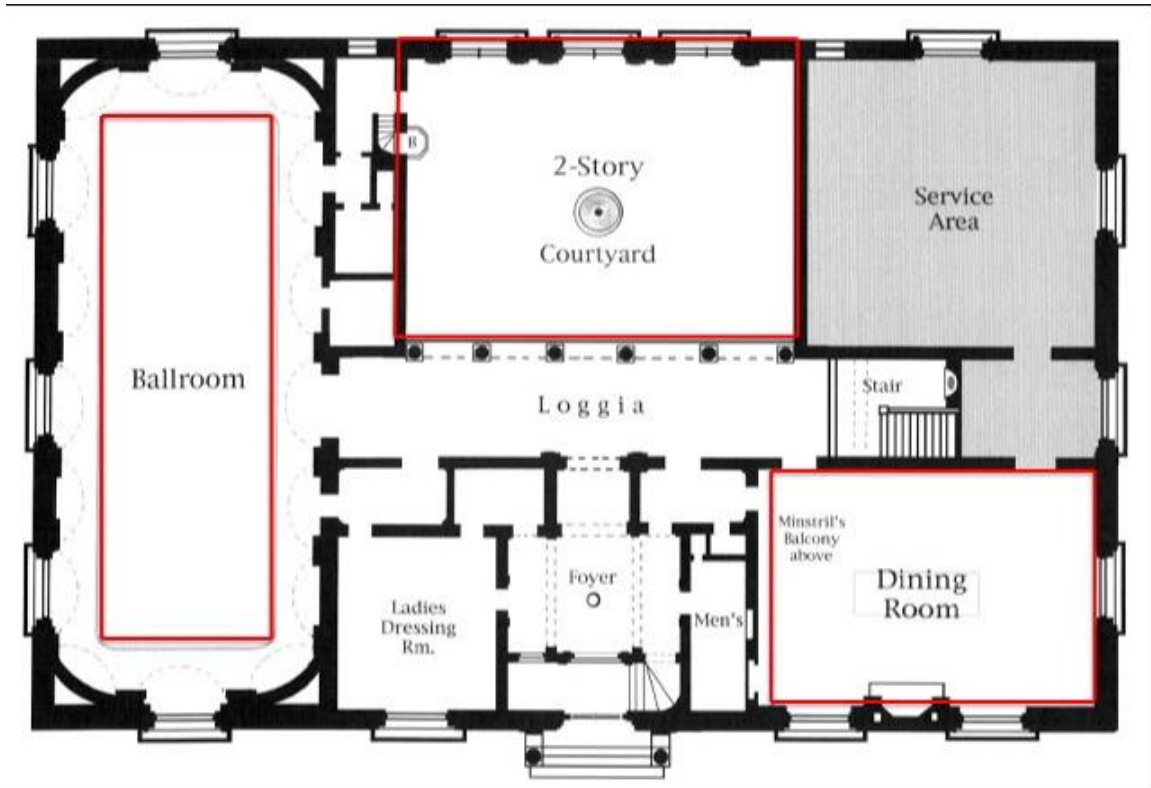




Figure 53a:

Photograph of the two-storey cloistered Spanish courtyard from the Castle of Vélez Blanco, 1506-1515, the central feature in the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence.  
The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 53b:

Florentine marble fountain with the arms of Jacopo de'Pazzi, made by Benedetto da Maiano, and Giovanni da Maiano, about 1470.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (41.190.471).



Figure 54:  
Isabella Stewart Gardner's courtyard at Fenway Court in Boston.  
<https://www.gardnermuseum.org/experience/rooms/courtyard>



Figure 55:

Photograph of one of the end walls of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence, illustrating a sixteenth-century Brussels tapestry and early sixteenth-century Spanish pulpit. The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.





Fig. 56a:

Photograph of the Blumenthal's eighteenth-century Venetian style ballroom, decorated by Armand-Abert Rateau between 1919-1920.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 56b:

Photographic detail of the Venetian-style ballroom, featuring a marble bust of Louis XV and a statue of Orpheus in the Blumenthal's collection.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figures 57a:

Suite of chairs in the eighteenth-century Venetian style fabricated in Rateau's workshop, perhaps commissioned by the Blumenthals, about 1920.

Galerie Anne-Sophie Duval archives, Paris.

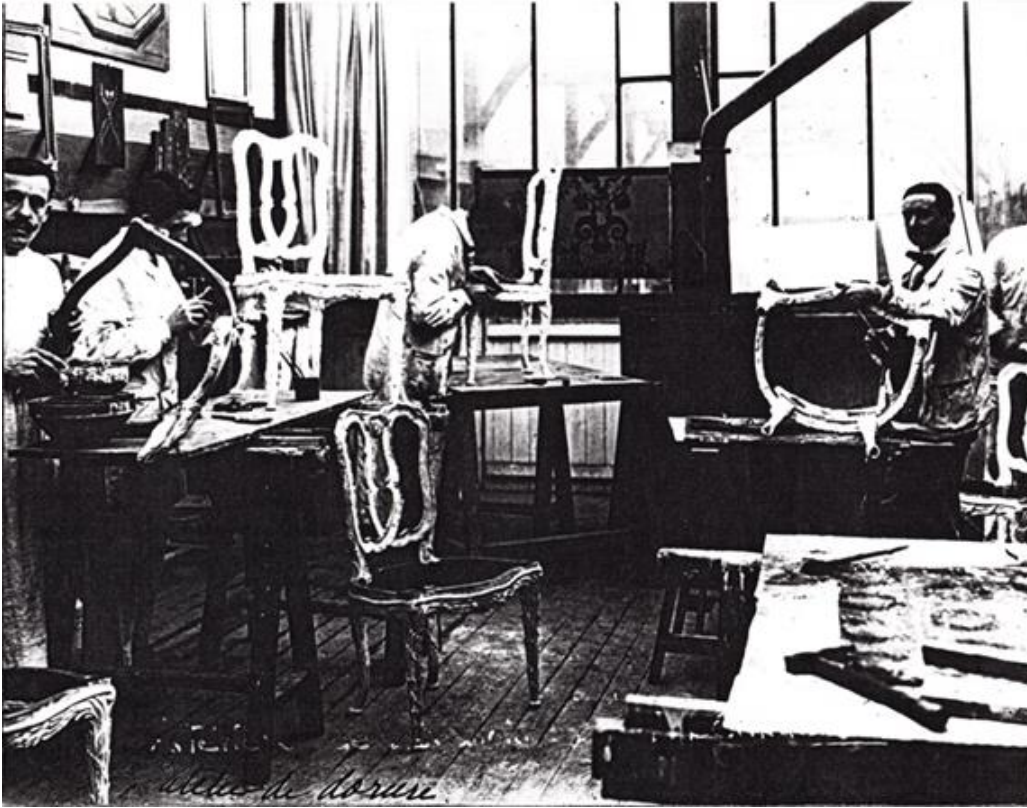


Figure 57b:  
Detail of the fabrication of the Venetian-style chairs in Rateau's workshop. Galerie Anne-Sophie Duvale archives, Paris.





Figure 58a:

Photograph of the Blumenthal's dining room in their Park Avenue Residence.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 58b:

Detail of the minstrel's gallery and the Trinity painting by Agnolo Gaddi.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 59:  
Second-floor plan of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence.  
Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.

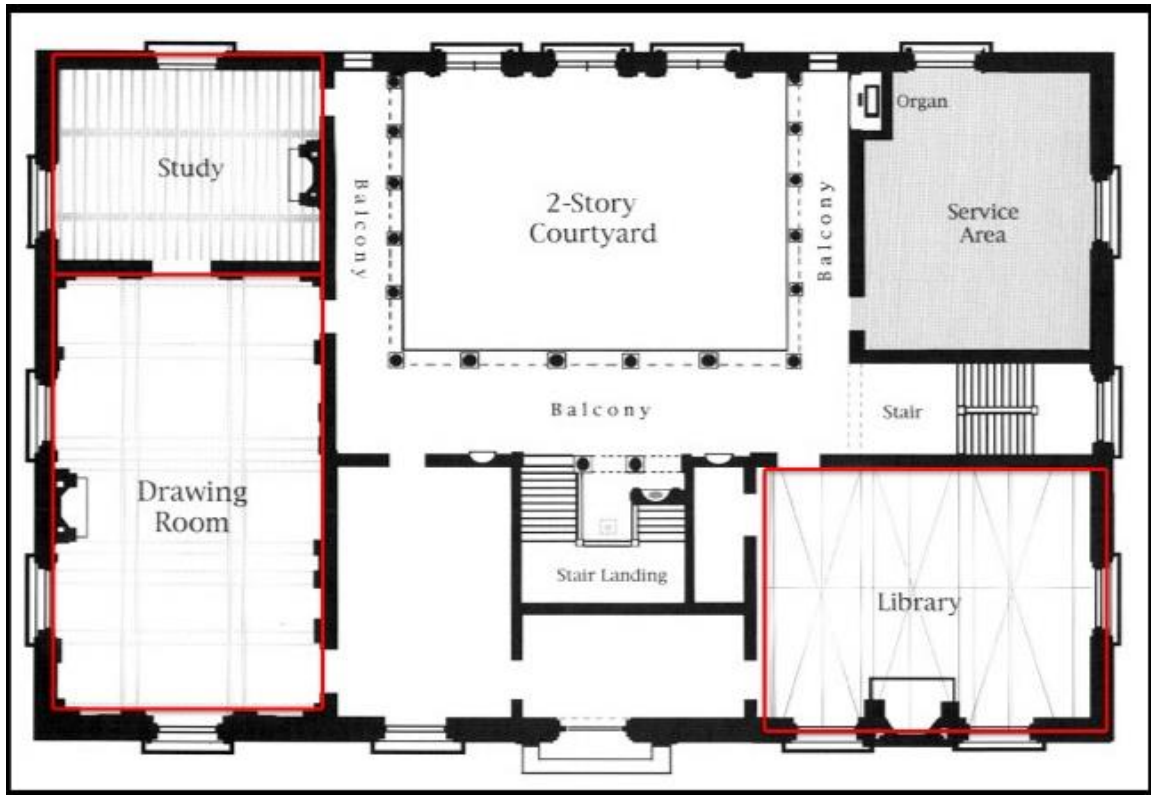


Figure 60a:

Photograph of the second floor perimeter of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence.  
The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.





Figure 60b:



Figure 61a:  
Velvet-lined drawing room on the second floor of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence. The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 61b:

Detail of Callisto Piazza's *Portrait of a Gentleman*, c. 1530-35 (formerly attributed to Lorenzo Lotto), purchased from the Berensons in 1906 and hanging in the Blumenthal's drawing room of their Park Avenue residence. The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 62:

Left: Photograph of George Blumenthal's study at his Park Avenue residence highlighting the lunette depicting the Virgin and Child painted by Cima da Conegliano in 1502. The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.

Right: Photograph of the reunited lunette and central panel depicting Catherine of Alexandria, today in the Wallace Collection, London (inv. no. P1-1a).





Figure 63:

Photograph of the panelled entry to the third floor of the Blumenthal's Park Avenue residence, featuring a full-length portrait of Florence Blumenthal painted by Giovanni Boldini in 1912.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.

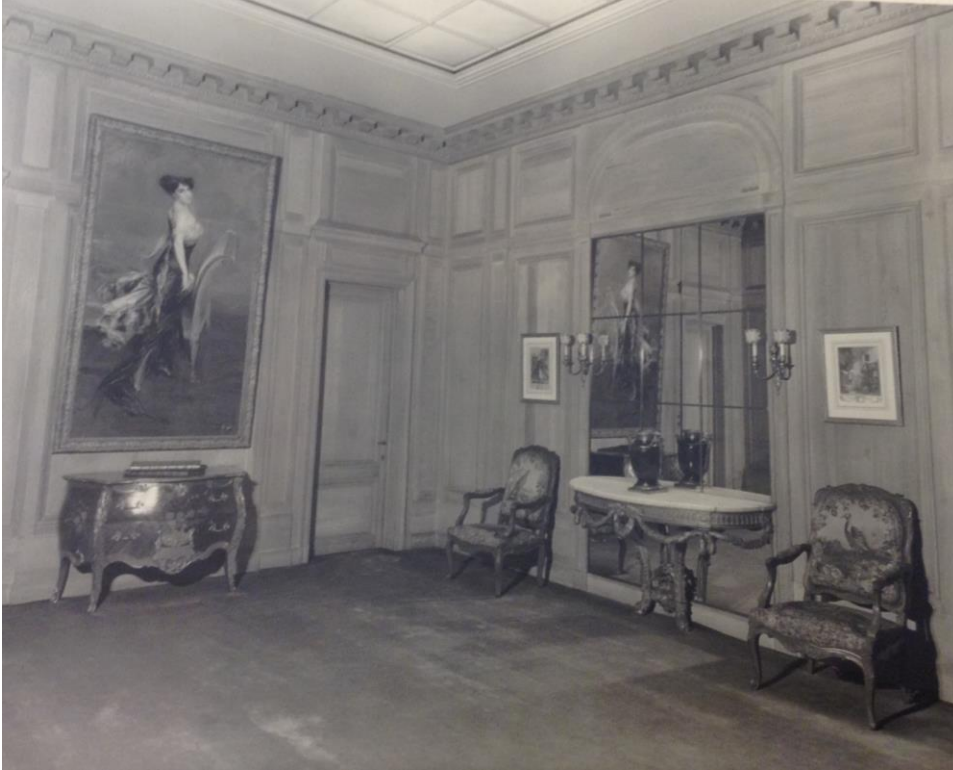


Figure 64a:  
Photograph of Florence Blumenthal's bedroom at Park Avenue.  
The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 64b:

Photograph of Florence Blumenthal's bedroom at Park Avenue.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 65a:  
Marjorie Merriweather Post's bedroom, 2 East 92<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York, c. 1930. Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Archives.





Figure 65b:  
Marjorie Merriweather Post's bedroom, Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens,  
Washington, D.C.



Figure 66:  
Florence Blumenthal's dressing room at Park Avenue.  
The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 67a:

Florence Blumenthal's sitting room at Park Avenue, featuring an armchair (part of a suite) made by Jean-Baptiste Claude Sené for Queen Marie-Antoinette of France, conserved in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.205.2). The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.

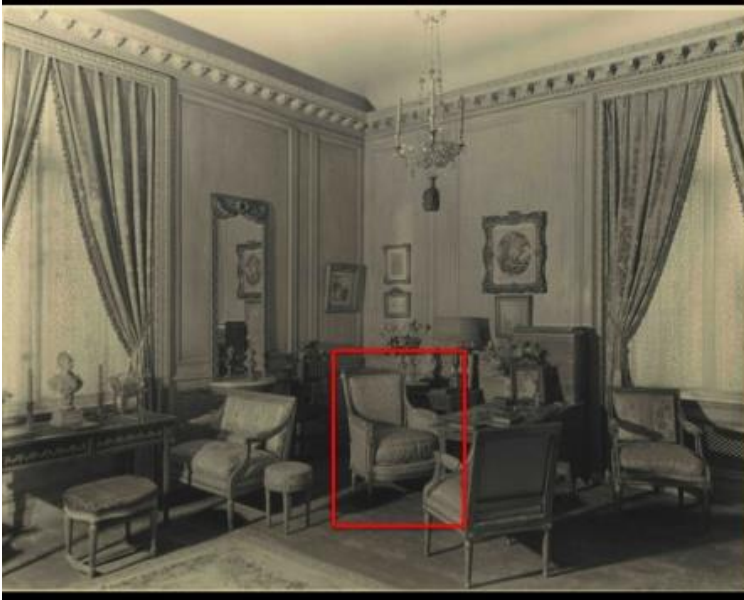


Figure 67b:

Florence Blumenthal's sitting room at Park Avenue, featuring a suite of furniture made by Jean-Baptiste Claude Sené for Queen Marie-Antoinette of France, conserved in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: Fire screen (41.205.1);

Daybed: (41.205.3a,b).

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.

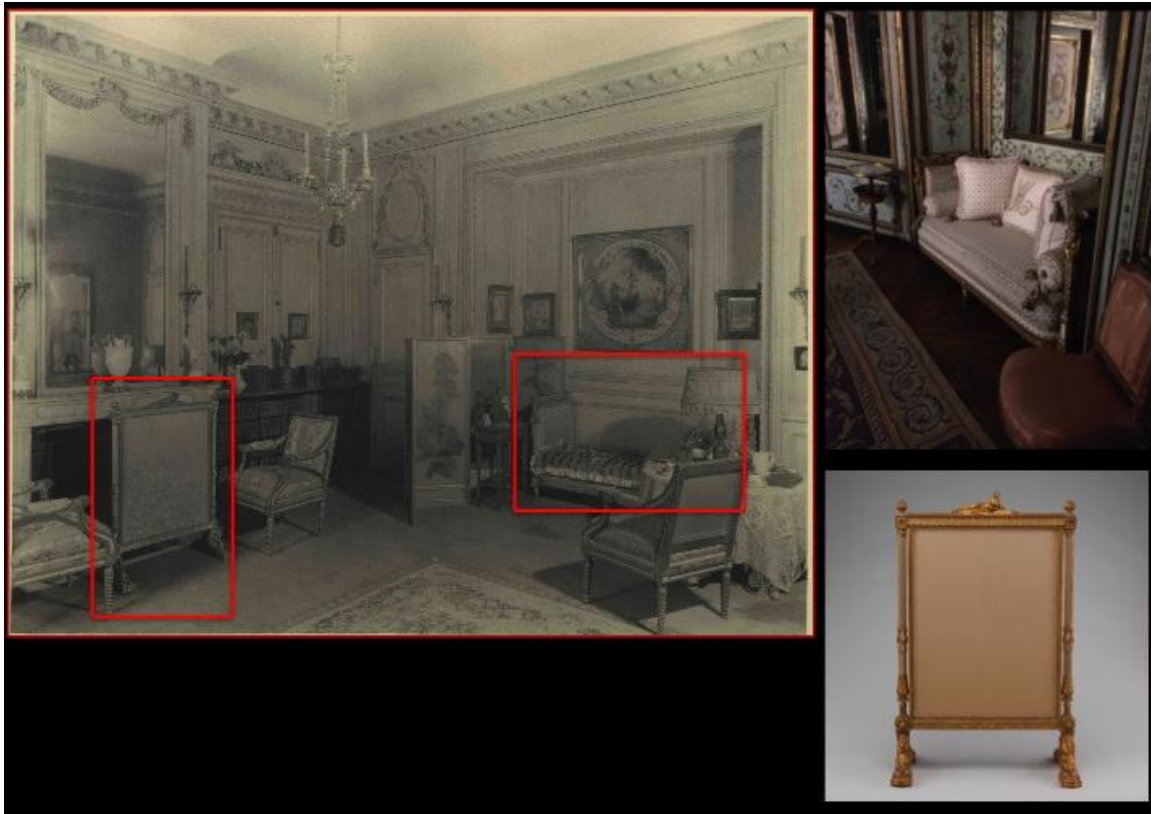


Figure 68:

Photograph of Florence Blumenthal's bathroom in the English Adam style at Park Avenue.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.





Figure 69:

George Blumenthal's bedroom at Park Avenue. The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 70:

Photograph of the Blumenthal's breakfast room at Park Avenue, featuring the portrait of George Blumenthal by Adolphe Dechenaud.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.



Figure 71:

Photograph of the fourth floor service quarters at Park Avenue.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.





Figure 72a:

Photograph of the Blumenthal's lower level pool at Park Avenue, with murals by Paul Thévenaz, about 1920.

The Home of George and Florence Blumenthal, Fifty East Seventieth Street, New York.

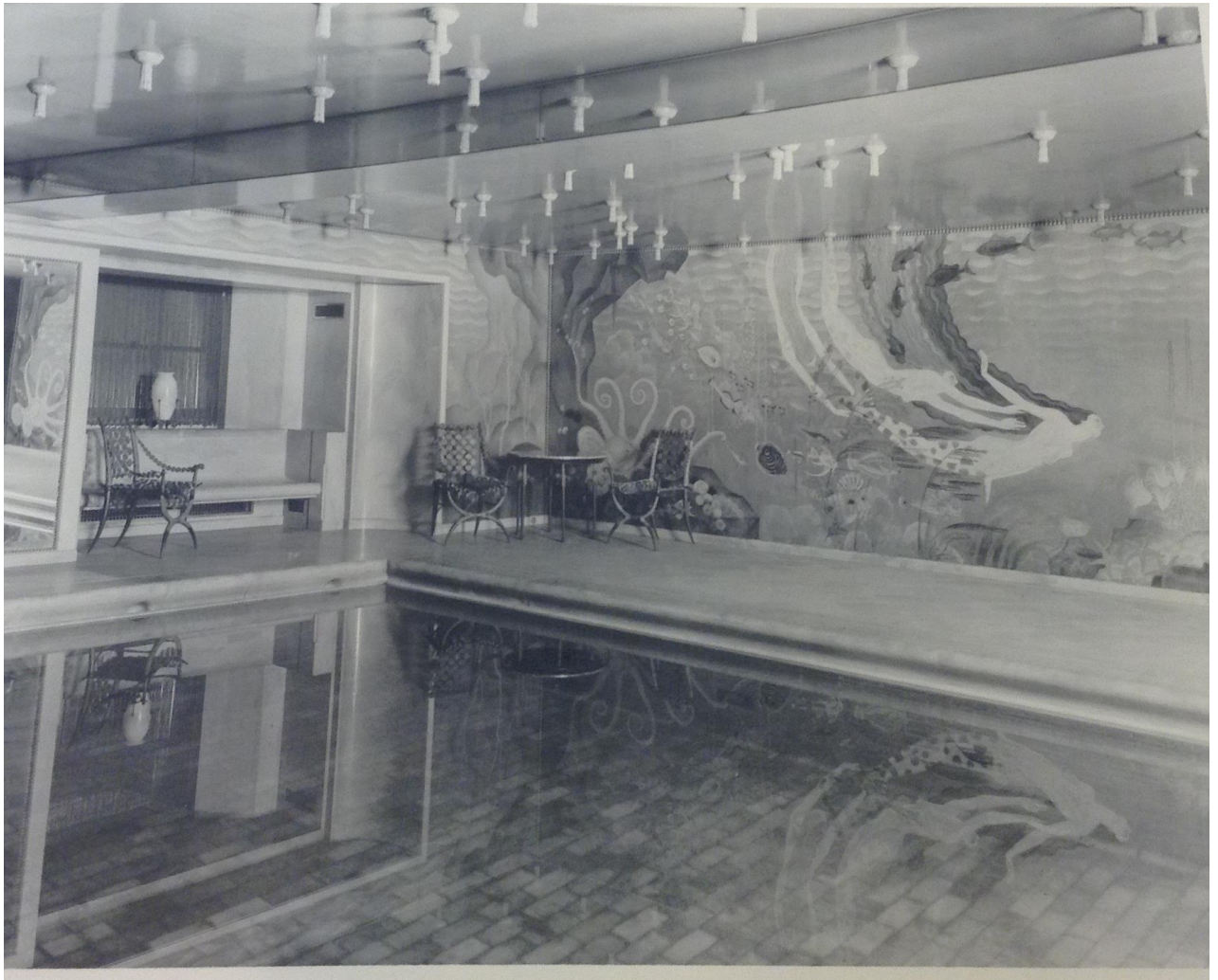


Figure 72b:



Figure 72c:

Detail of the mural decoration by Paul Thévenaz for the Blumenthal's swimming pool at Park Avenue.

Paul Thévenaz, Paul Thévenaz : a record of his life and art, together with an essay on style by the artist, and including 107 reproductions of his drawings, paintings & decorative work (New York: Privately printed, 1922)

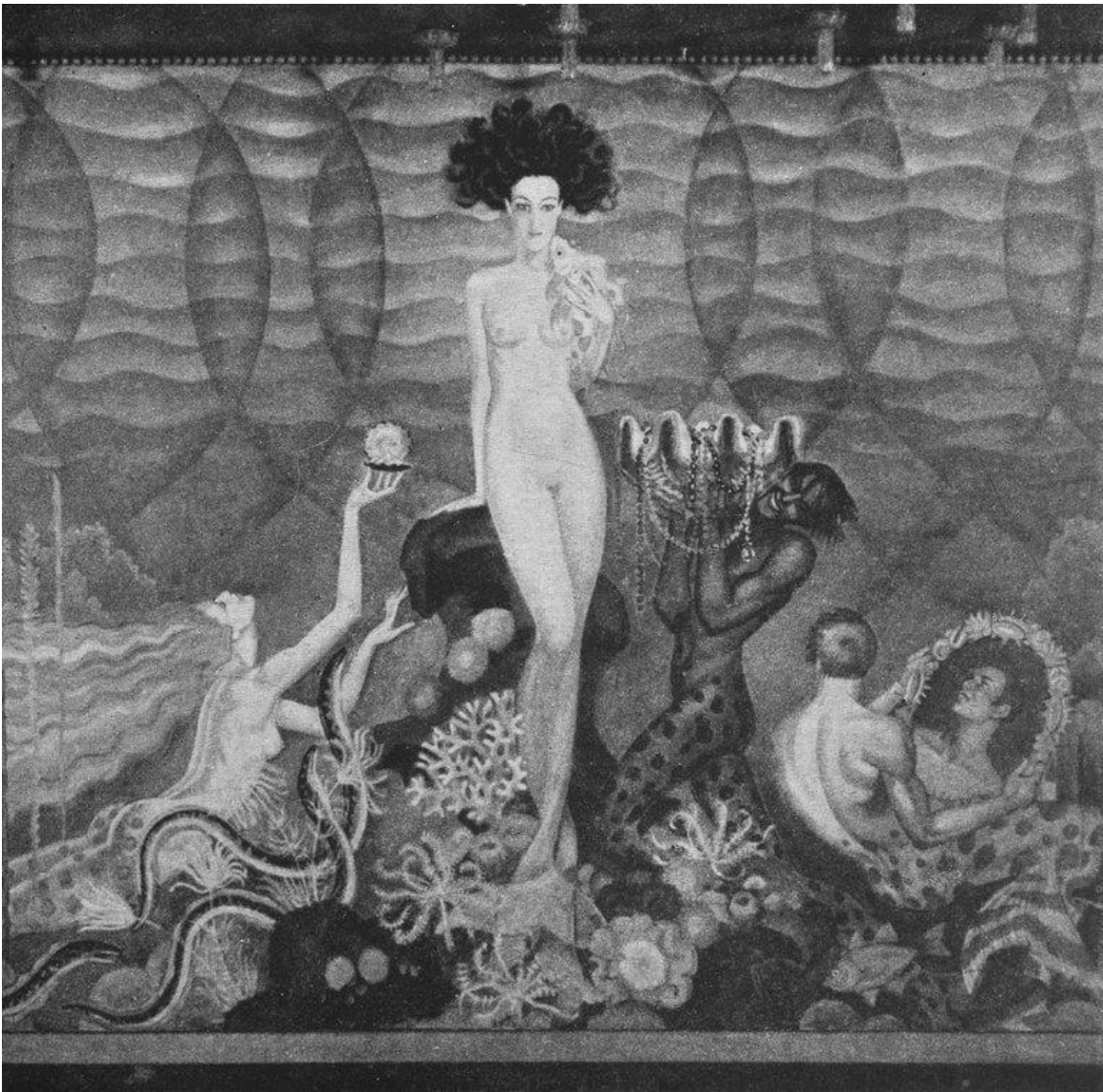




Figure 73:

Pencil sketch of Florence Blumenthal by Paul Thévenaz, about 1920.

Paul Thévenaz, Paul Thévenaz : a record of his life and art, together with an essay on style by the artist, and including 107 reproductions of his drawings, paintings & decorative work (New York: Privately printed, 1922).



Figure 74:

One of six patinated bronze armchairs made by Rateau, c. 1919-1920, for George and Florence Blumenthal's pool at Park Avenue.

"DeLorenzo: Thirty Years," *Christie's*, New York, December 14, 2010, lot 24.



Documentation illustrating Madame Ephrussi's ownership of 21 Avenue du Bois du Boulogne, Paris in 1909, the site of the Blumenthal's temporary residence in 1919. VO11 353, Archives de Paris.

Imp. Mancini, 1901 (P. 100, P. 101) - 100

Figure 76a:

The Blumenthal's house at 15 Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris in the sixteenth district (originally 11-13 Boulevard de Montmorency), acquired in 1919. G. & F. B. Scrapbook.





Figure 76b:

Exterior view of 15 Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris.

Fonds: Boutterin, Maurice (1882-1970), Demeure de M. Blumenthal, Auteil (Paris):  
aménagement. 1920 (Réf. Objet: BOUTT/D/20/3), Cité de l'Architecture et Patrimoine,  
Paris.





Figure 76c:

Rear exterior view of 15 Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris.

Fonds: Boutterin, Maurice (1882-1970), Demeure de M. Blumenthal, Auteil (Paris):  
aménagement. 1920 (Réf. Objet: BOUTT/D/20/3), Cité de l'Architecture et Patrimoine,  
Paris.



Figure 76d:

Exterior view of the gardens at 15 Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris.

Topographie de la France, Paris 16 arr., 61ème quartier, Boulevard Montmorency-  
Propriété Blumenthal (H83189), BNF, Département des Estampes, Paris.



Figure 77a:

Architectural plan of the Blumenthal property on the Boulevard de Montmorency.  
Archives de Paris Serie Vo 11 2250.

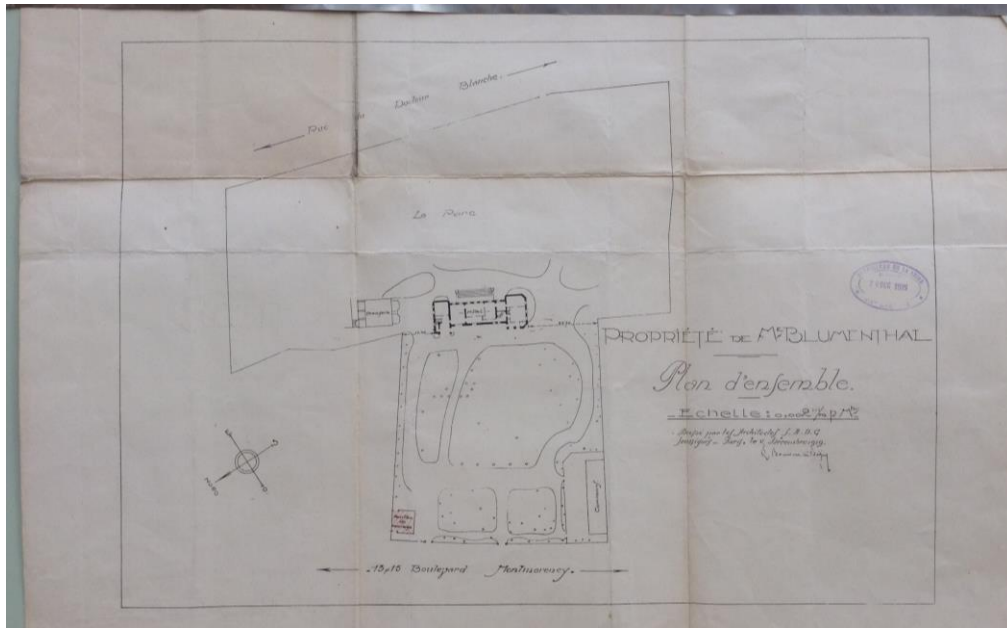


Figure 77b:  
Architectural drawings of the Blumenthal's Concierge Pavilion. Archives de Paris Serie  
Vo 11 2250.

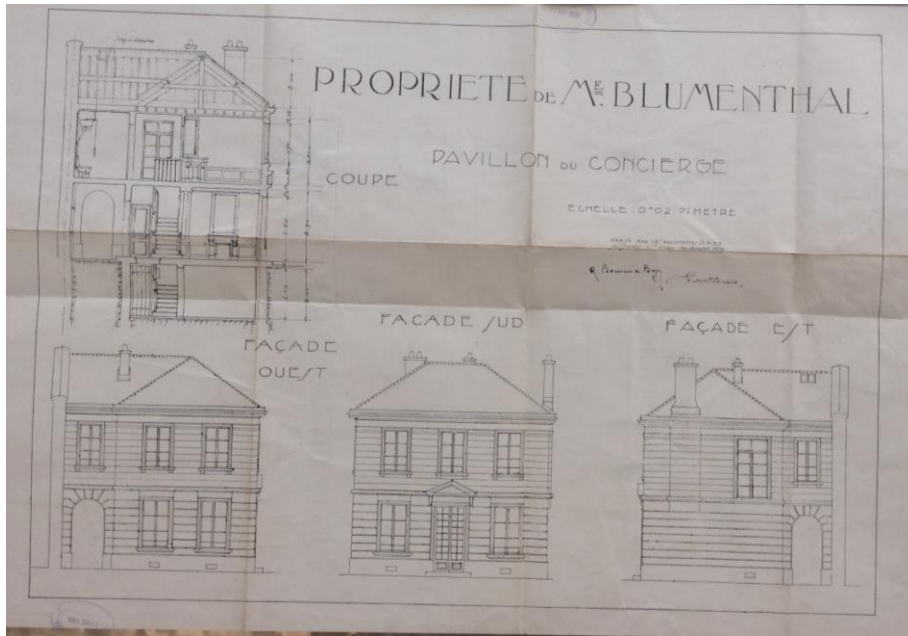


Figure 78:

Letter (dated January 7, 1922) from architects Bouwens de Boijen and Bouterin requesting permission from the Prefect to construct a *Salle de Concert* on the Blumenthal property.

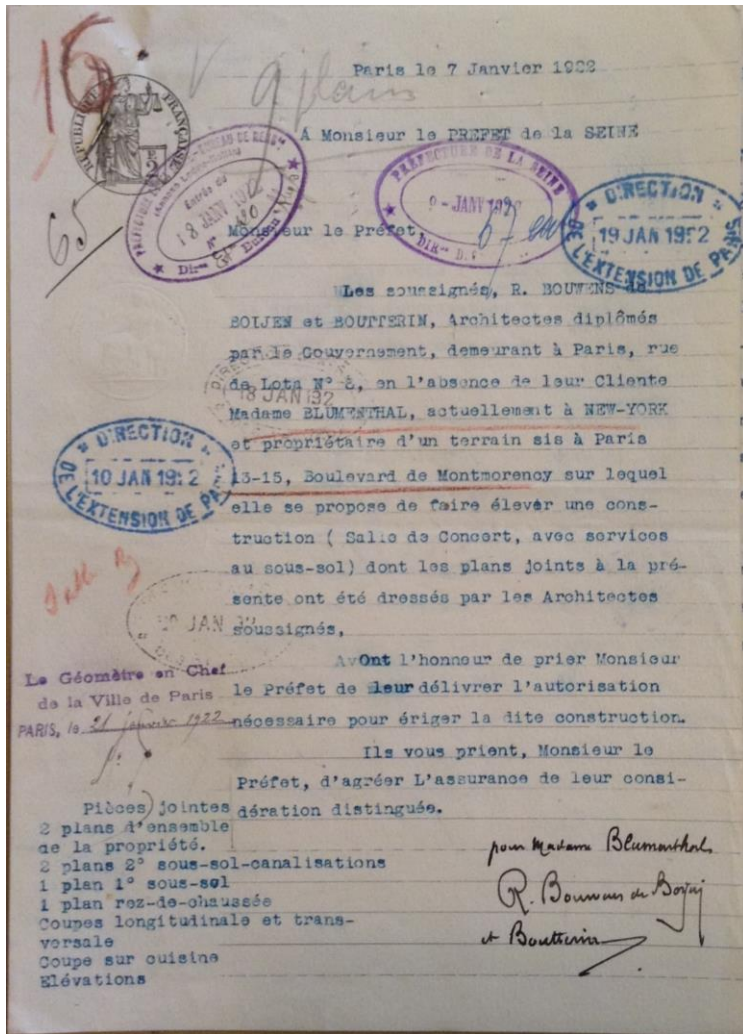




Figure 79a:

Elevation for the façade of the Blumenthal's Gothic room. Archives de Paris, V011 4.

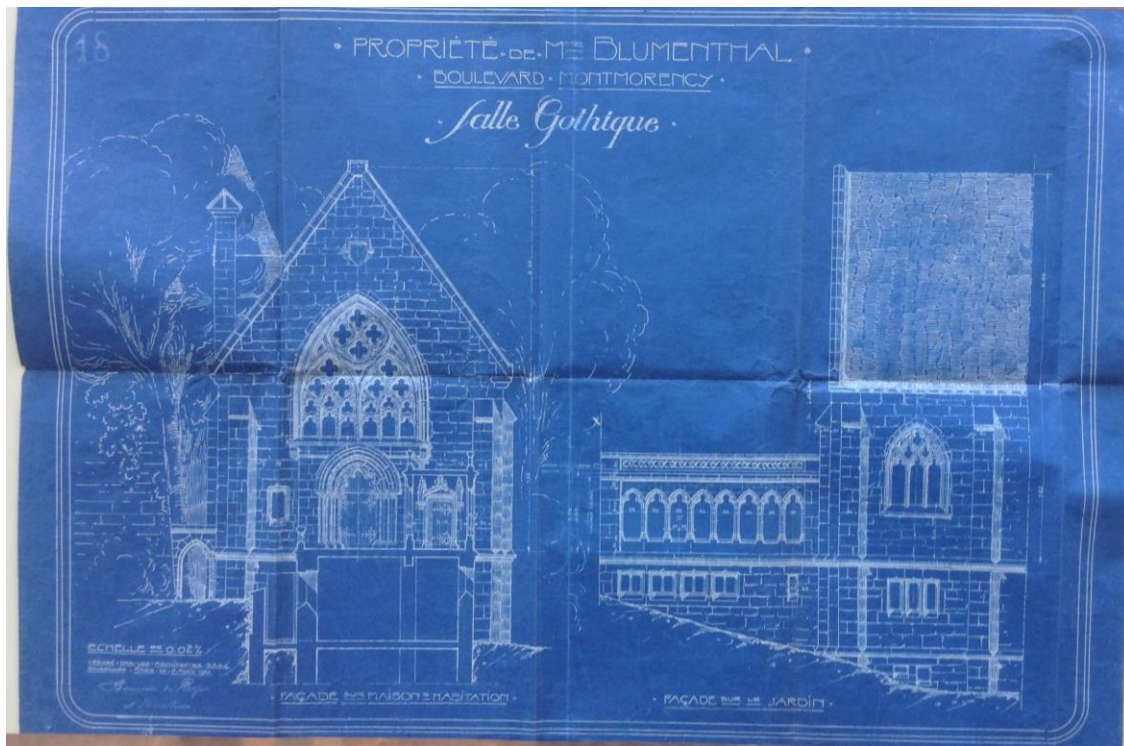


Figure 79b:  
Transversal elevation of the Blumenthal's Gothic room. Archives de Paris, V011 5.

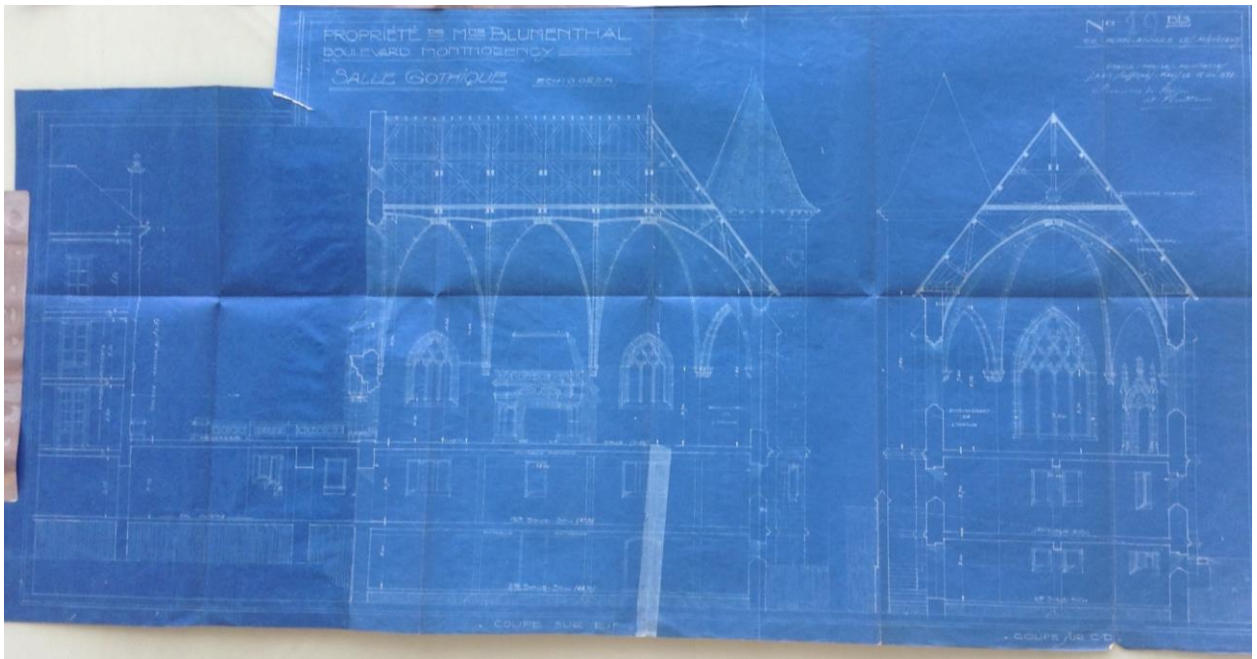


Figure 79c:  
Elevation above the kitchen of the Blumenthal's Gothic room.  
Archives de Paris V011 6.

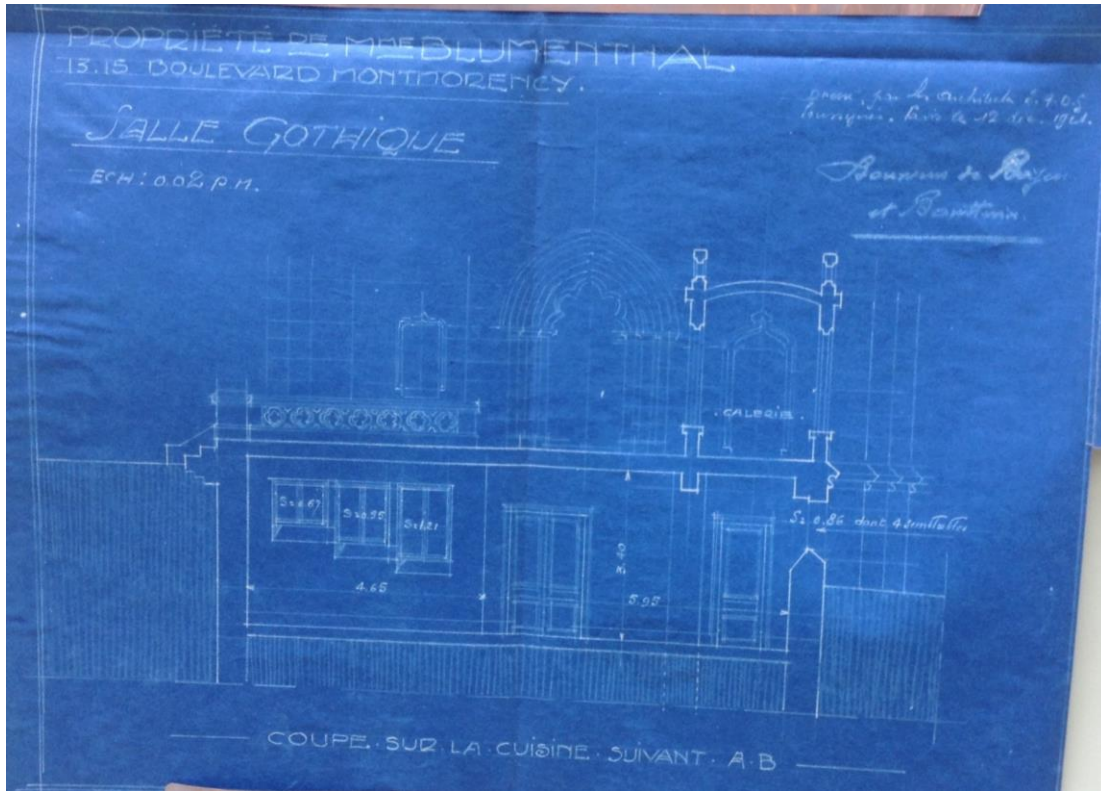






Figure 80:  
Exterior photograph of the back of the Blumenthal's house and connecting Gothic room.  
The Met Cloisters archives.



Figure 81:

Photograph of the Gothic room's principal door dating to the third quarter of the twelfth century that once decorated the church of Reugny in Allier. "Notice sur les Fragments de Monuments Anciens Ayant Servi à Construire la Salle de Musique de l'Hôtel du 15 Boulevard de Montmorency à Paris" (Paris: Les Editions Albert Lévy, 1930).

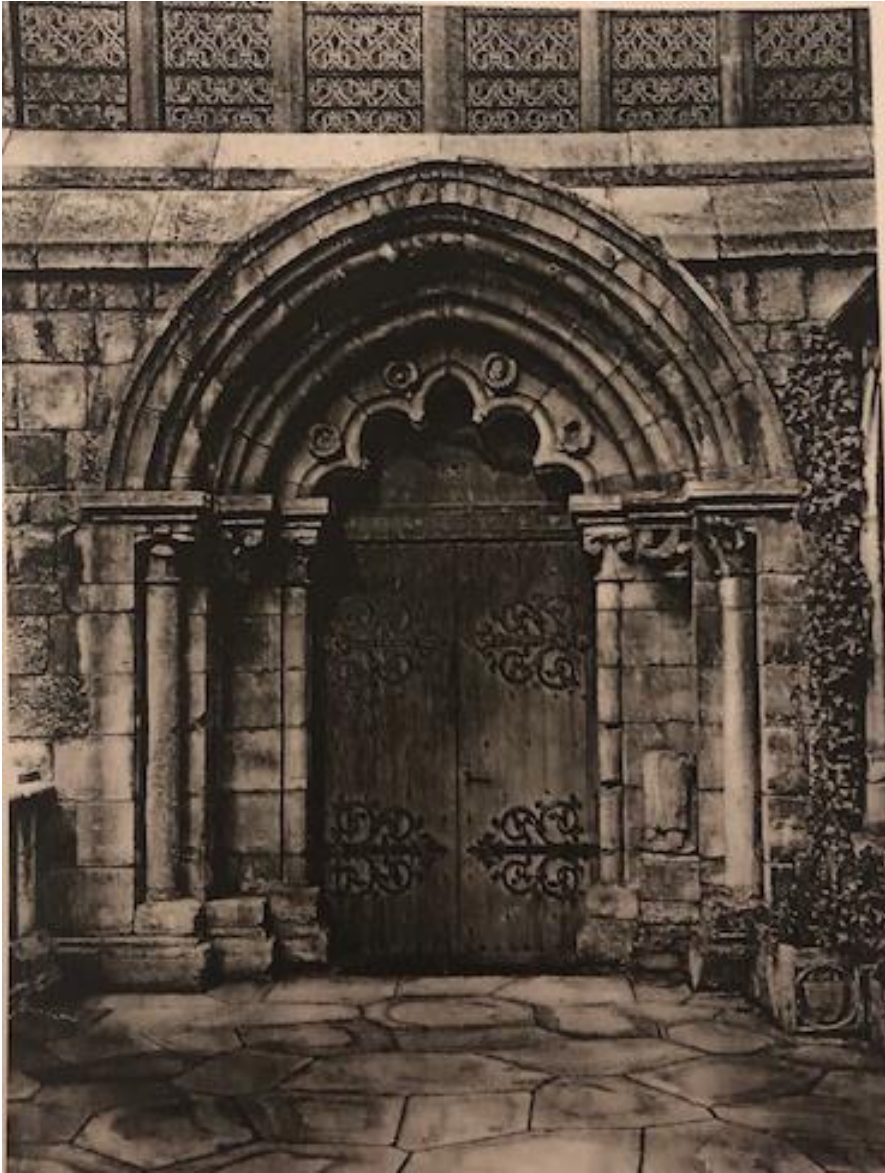


Figure 82:

Photograph of a detail of the covered gallery of broken arcades connecting the Gothic room to the Blumenthal's main house. Fonds: Boutterin, Maurice (1882-1970), Demeure de M. Blumenthal, Auteil (Paris): aménagement. 1920 (Réf. Objet: BOUTT/D/20/3), Cité de l'Architecture et Patrimoine, Paris.

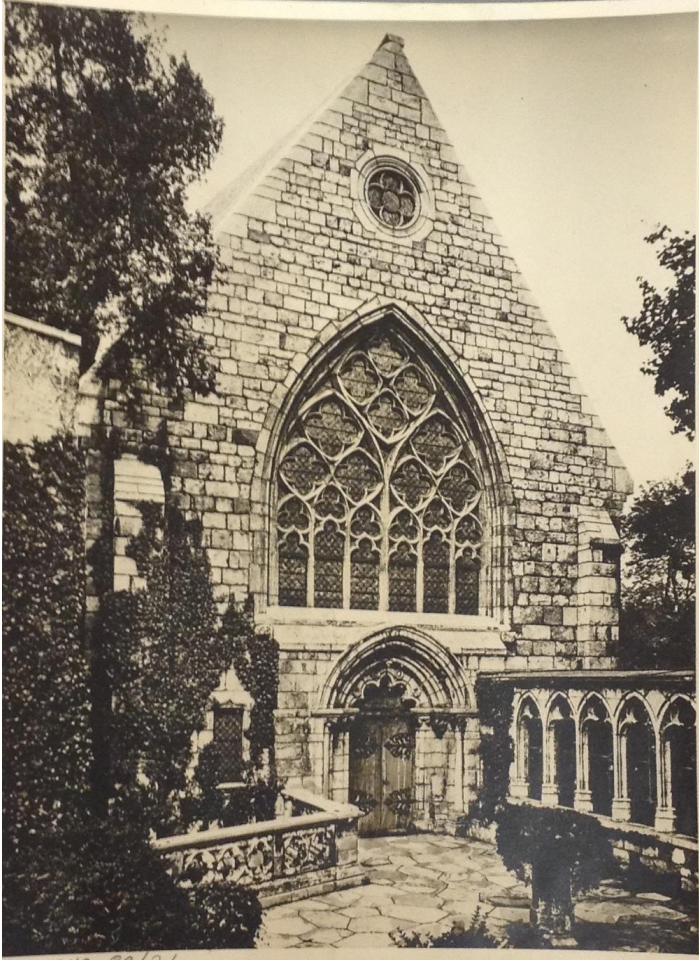




Figure 83:

Photograph of the rectangular-shaped interior of the Gothic room illustrating the central window over the principal door. Fonds: Boutterin, Maurice (1882-1970), Demeure de M. Blumenthal, Auteil (Paris): aménagement. 1920 (Réf. Objet: BOUTT/D/20/3), Cité de l'Architecture et Patrimoine, Paris.



Figure 84:

Photograph of the fifteenth-century chimney in the Gothic room.

“Notice sur les Fragments de Monuments Anciens Ayant Servi à Construire la Salle de Musique de l’Hôtel du 15 Boulevard de Montmorency à Paris” (Paris: Les Editions Albert Lévy, 1930).



Figure 85:  
Photograph of the fifteenth-century door from the hôtel Coeffiers d'Effiat in Gannat in situ. G. & F. B. Scrapbook.





Figure 86:  
Photograph of the exterior silhouette on the garden side of the Gothic room.  
G. & F. B. Scrapbook





Figure 87:

Top: Photograph of the full-size model of the casework installed in the Gothic room.

Bottom: Photograph of the console in the Casavant workshop before the organ was shipped to France.

Casavant Frères archives, Montreal.

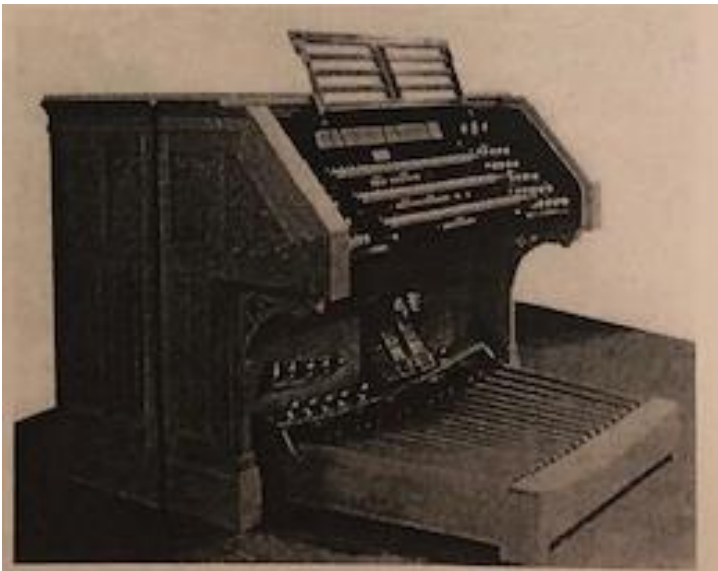


Figure 88:

Photograph of the interior of the Gothic room, illustrating the organ at the base of the circular tower at one corner of the room. "Notice sur les Fragments de Monuments Anciens Ayant Servi à Construire la Salle de Musique de l'Hôtel du 15 Boulevard de Montmorency à Paris" (Paris: Les Editions Albert Lévy, 1930).



Figure 89:  
Samuel Casavant (left), Jules Vierge (center), and three unidentified persons outside the  
Gothic room.  
Casavant Frères archives, Montreal.

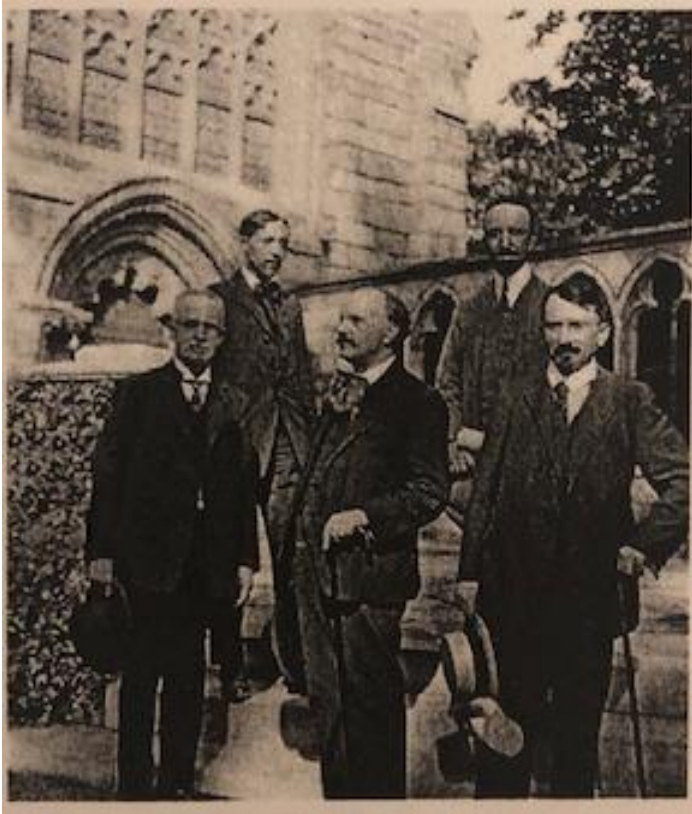


Figure 90:

The November 1923 issue of *Le Monde*, featuring the Blumenthal's Casavant organ on the front page.

Casavant Frères archives, Montreal.



Figure 91:

Photograph of Florence Blumenthal surrounded by the jury of her Fondation in the Gothic room, June 26, 1926.

Fonds: Boutterin, Maurice (1882-1970), Demeure de M. Blumenthal, Auteil (Paris): aménagement. 1920 (Réf. Objet: BOUTT/D/20/3), Cité de l'Architecture et Patrimoine, Paris.





Figure 92a:

Photographs of the Renaissance furniture, paintings, sculpture, and ceramics on display in the Gothic room. G. & F. B. Scrapbook



Figure 92b:



Figure 92c:





Figure 93:  
Photograph illustrating the marle bust of Florence Blumenthal by Paul Landowski on display in the Gothic room. G. & F. B. Scrapbook



Figure 94:  
Gothic room donated by Kate Sturges Buckingham, the Art Institute of Chicago, c. 1927.  
Ryerson & Burnham Libraries, Chicago.



Figure 95:  
Ceremony held in the Gothic room following Florence Blumenthal's death in September 1930. G. & F. B. Scrapbook.



Figure 96a:

The George Blumenthal collection sale catalogue, Galerie Georges Petit, December 1-2, 1932 (day one). Archives de Paris.

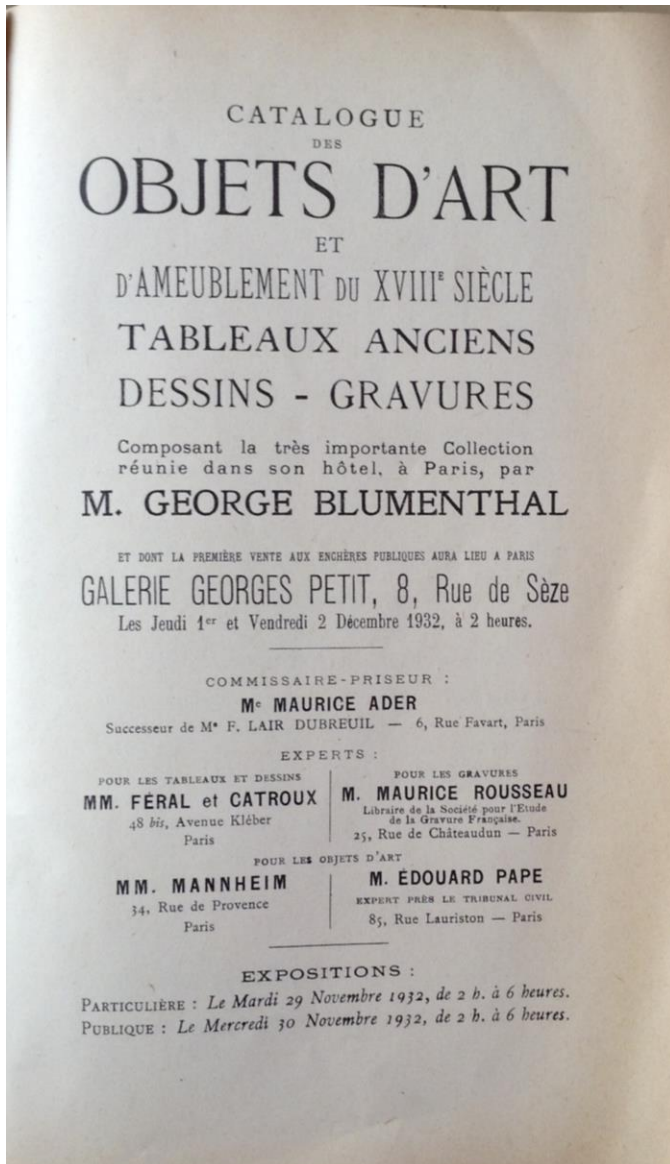




Figure 96b:

The George Blumenthal collection sale catalogue, Galerie Georges Petit, December 1-2, 1932 (day two). Archives de Paris.

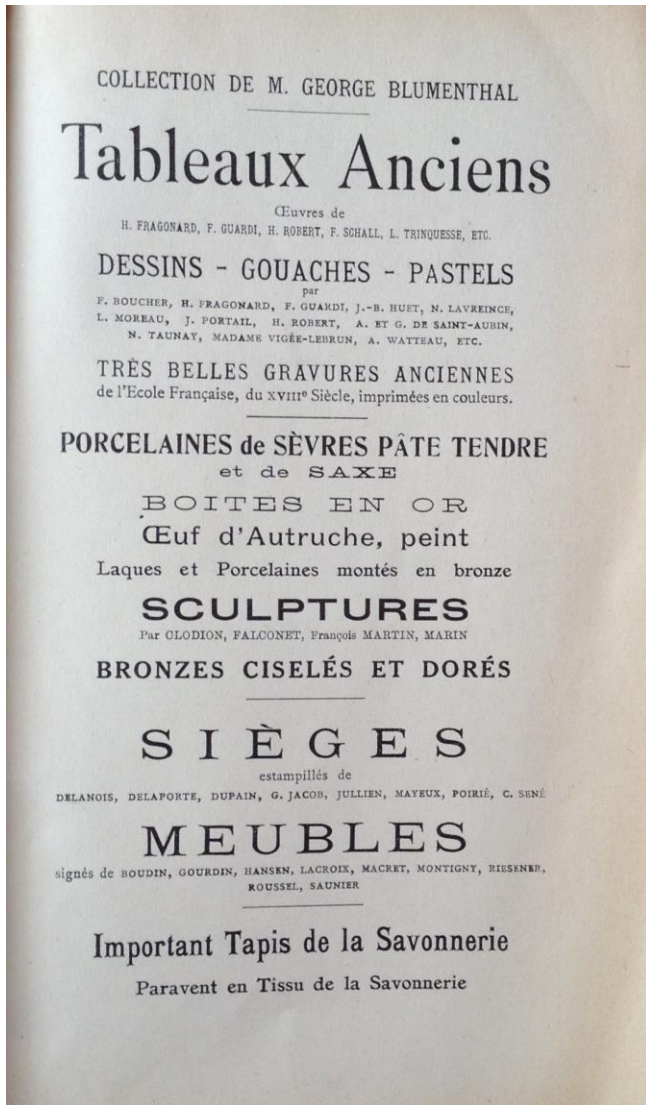


Figure 97:

Article from the daily newspaper, *Paris Midi*, referring to the Blumenthal collection of eighteenth-century French objects as "of the highest class and taste." Archives de Paris.

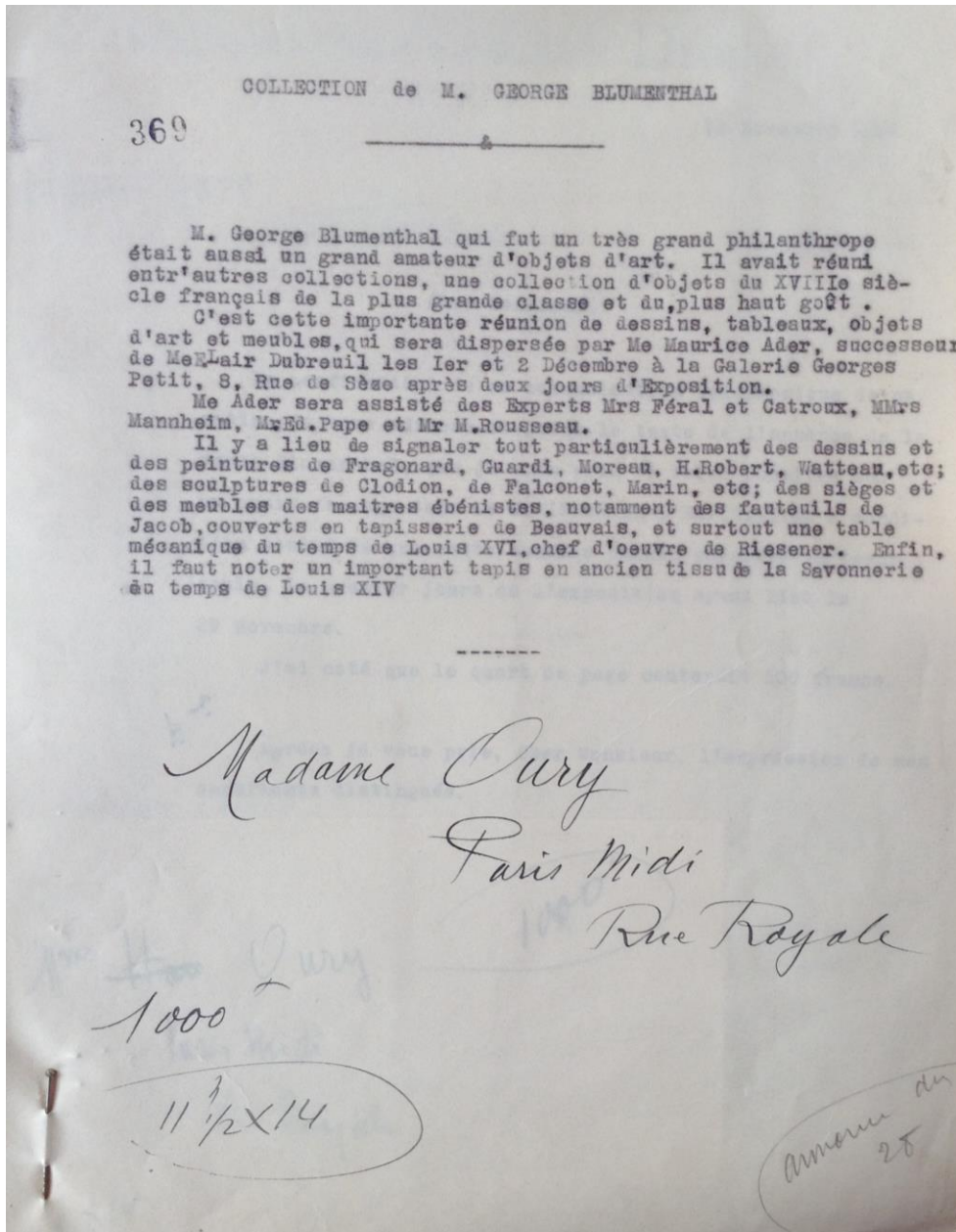


Figure 98:

Cachepot decorated in Chinese lacquer and gilt-bronze, Paris, 1745, purchased by the Louvre Museum at the Blumenthal sale in 1932. Louvre Museum (inv. no. OA8243).



Figure 99:  
Drawing of The Adoration of the Shepherds by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, c. 1776,  
purchased by the Louvre Museum at the Blumenthal sale in 1932. Louvre Museum (inv.  
no. 31875).





Figure 100a:  
Photograph of the Cloisters illustrating the integration of the covered arcades, formerly part of the Blumenthal's Gothic room. Cloisters archives.

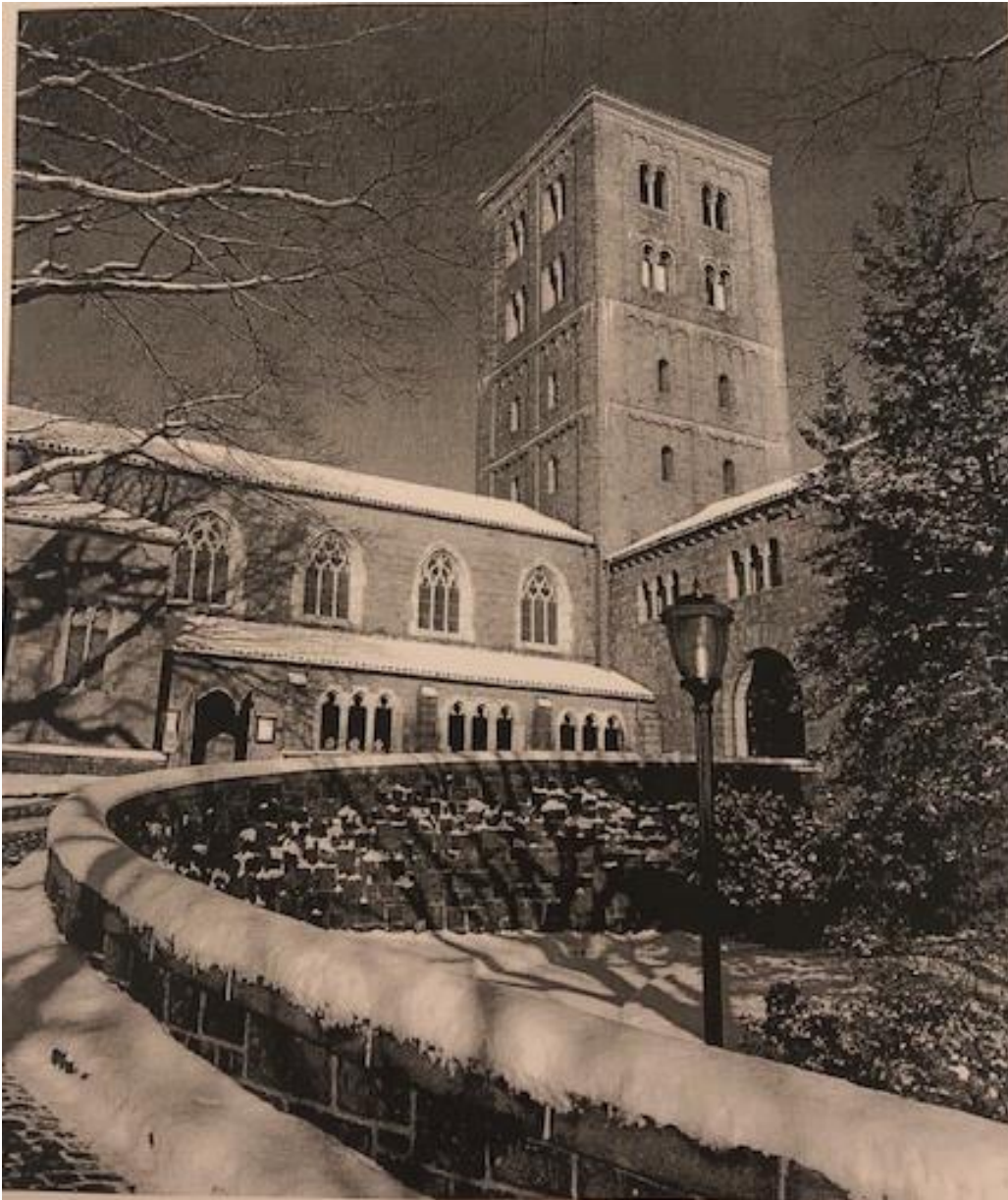


Figure 100b:  
Photograph of the former front door to the Blumenthal's Gothic room, integrated into the architecture of the Cloisters today.



Figure 100c:  
Former architectural doorway inside the Blumenthal's Gothic room, integrated into the architecture of the Cloisters today.





Figure 101a:

Exterior photograph of the Chateau de Malbosc and gardens outside of Grasse, France, purchased by the Blumenthals in 1925. Domaine du Château de Malbosc.

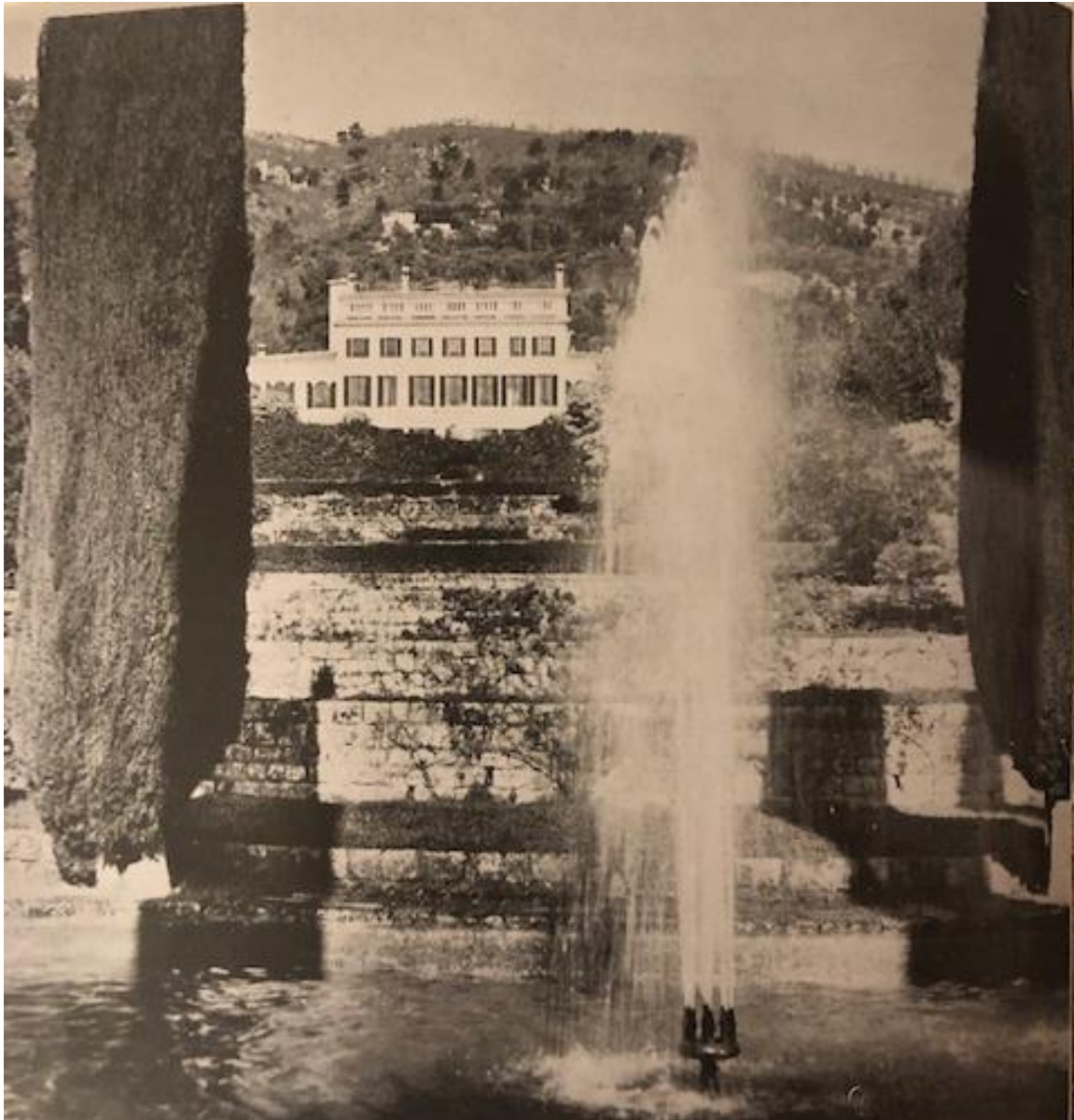


Figure 101b:

Photographs of some of the gardens and fountains at Malbosc.

The Blumenthal collection: scrapbook, 1909-1941, The Metropolitan Museum New York.

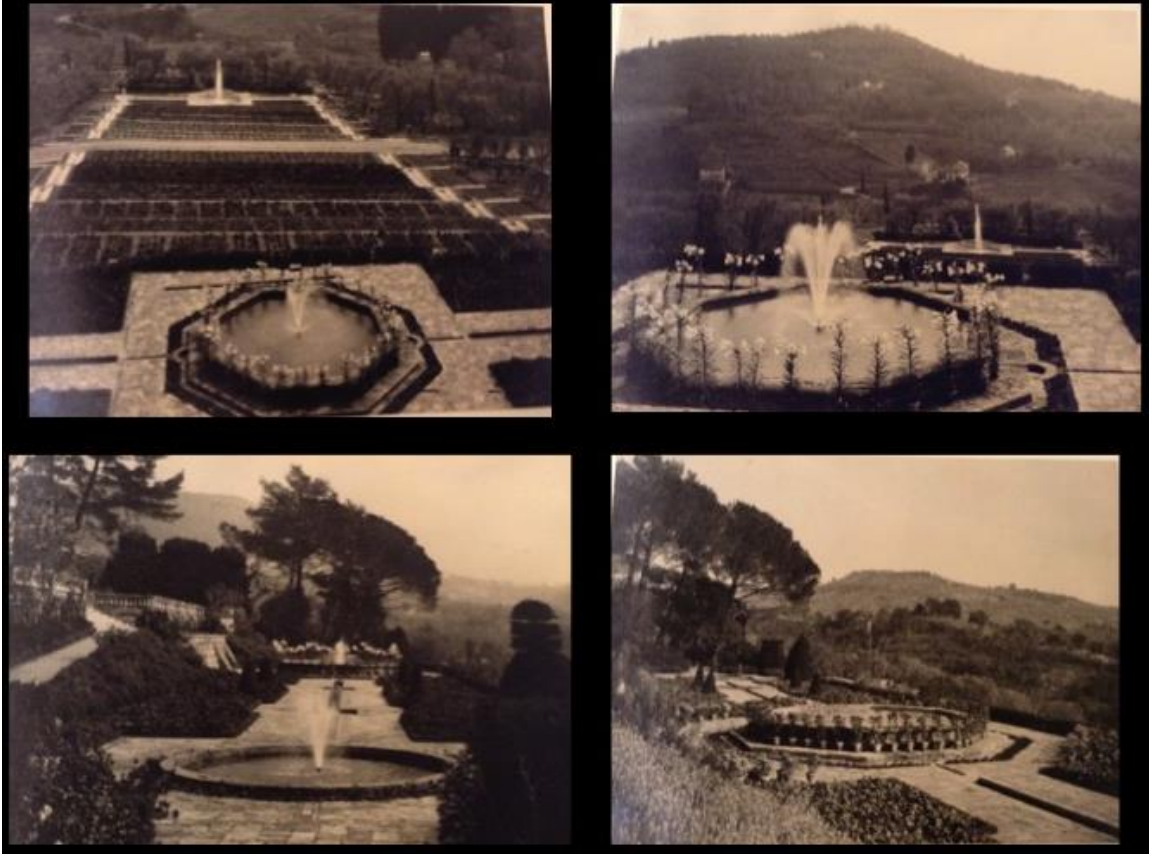


Figure 102a:  
George and Florence Blumenthal featured in the society pages of magazines in Aix-les-Bains.





Figure 102b:  
Detail of George and Florence Blumenthal in the news.



Figure 103a:

Hemicycle bathroom at Malbosc designed by Rateau. Franck and Rateau, Armand Albert Rateau: un baroque chez les modernes, pp. 136-138.





Figure 103b:

Bathroom hardware details at Malbosc designed by Rateau. Franck and Rateau, Armand Albert Rateau: un baroque chez les modernes, pp. 137-138.

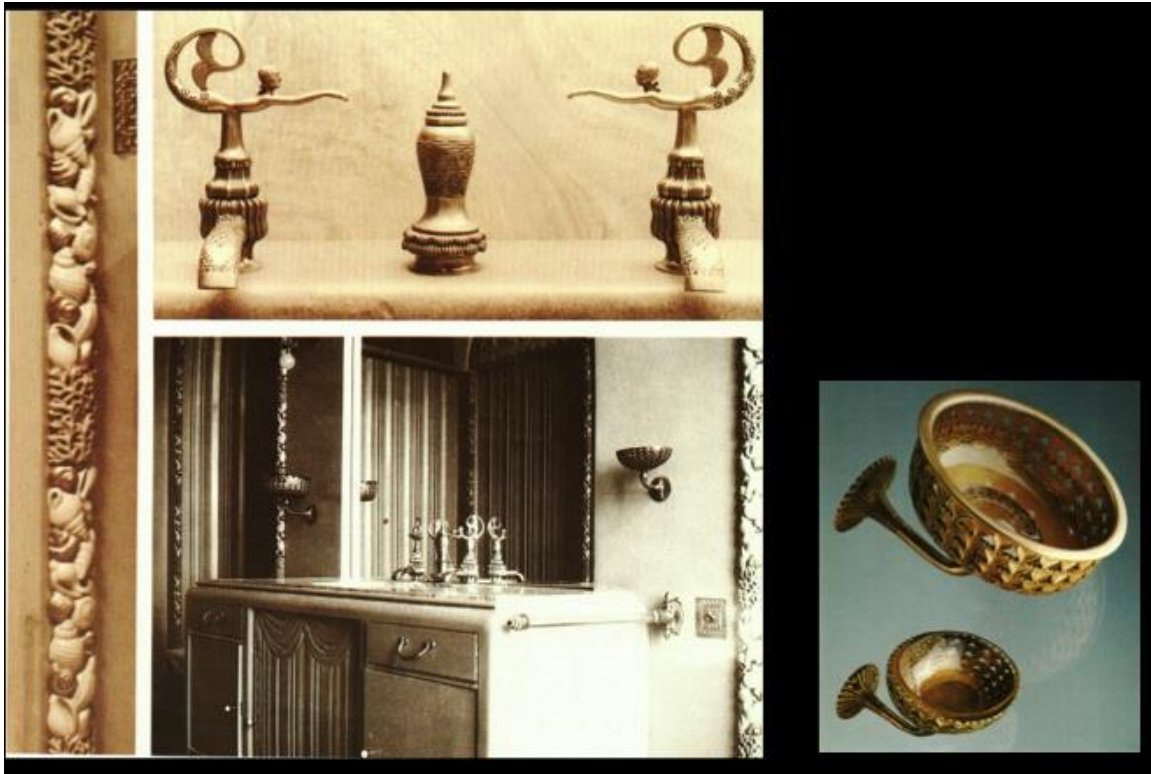


Figure 104:  
Florence Blumenthal's bathroom at Malbosc designed by Rateau. Armand Albert Rateau:  
un baroque chez les modernes, p. 135).



Figure 105:  
Chemin de Blumenthal (Blumenthal Way) financed by George Blumenthal in 1927 to  
connect Malbosc with the Moulin de Brun.



Figure 106:

Watercolor sketch depicting a reconstruction of the Vélez Blanco patio offered to Archer M. Huntington and George Blumenthal. George Blumenthal file, Office of the Secretary Records, MMA Archives.





Figure 107:

Record cover from a Baroque concert held in the Vélez Blanco patio at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1979.



Figure 108a:  
Current views of the Vélez Blanco patio installation, also known today as “The Blumenthal Patio.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 108b:

West wall of the courtyard, illustrating the Fajardo coat of arms. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.





Figure 108c:

Installation of Spanish Renaissance sculptures and decorative objects on the second floor patio. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure109a:  
Daybed by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, Paris, 1788. The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
(inv. no. 41.205.1)



Figure 109b:  
Armchair by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, Paris, 1788. The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
(inv. no. 41.205.2)



Figure 109c:  
Firescreen by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Sené, Paris, 1788. The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
(inv. no. 41.205.3a,b)



Figure 110:  
Mechanical table by Jean Henri Riesener, Paris, 1778. The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
(inv. no. 33.2).





[illegible]

Figure 112:

Cistern, possibly by the workshop of Orazio Fontana, Urbino, Italy, about 1545. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no 41.100.282).





Figure 112b:

Dish with a portrait of a girl, Gubbio, Italy, about 1520. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.100.278).



Figure 113:  
Plate, Castel Durante with Gubbio luster, Italy, about 1525. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.100.277).



Figure 114a:

Wide-rimmed bowl with figures from Virgin's Aeneid, Workshop of Maestro Giorgio Andreoli, after designs by Raphael, Gubbio, Italy, 1525. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.100.279).



Figure 114b:

Wide-rimmed bowl with figures from Virgin's Aeneid, Workshop of Maestro Giorgio Andreoli, after designs by Raphael, Gubbio, Italy, 1525. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.100.280).





Figure 115a:

Oval basin or dish with subject from Amadis of Gaul, Workshop of Orazio Fontana, Urbino or Turin, about 1559-64. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.190.109).



Figure 115b:

Oval basin or dish with subject from *Amadis of Gaul*, Workshop of Orazio Fontana, Urbino or Turin, about 1559-64. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.190.110).



Figure 116a:

Armorial tondo, School of Giovanni della Robbia, Florence, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.190.43).





Figure 116b:

Armoria tondo with the arms of Squarci Lupi, School of Giovanni della Robbia, Florence, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 41.190.44)



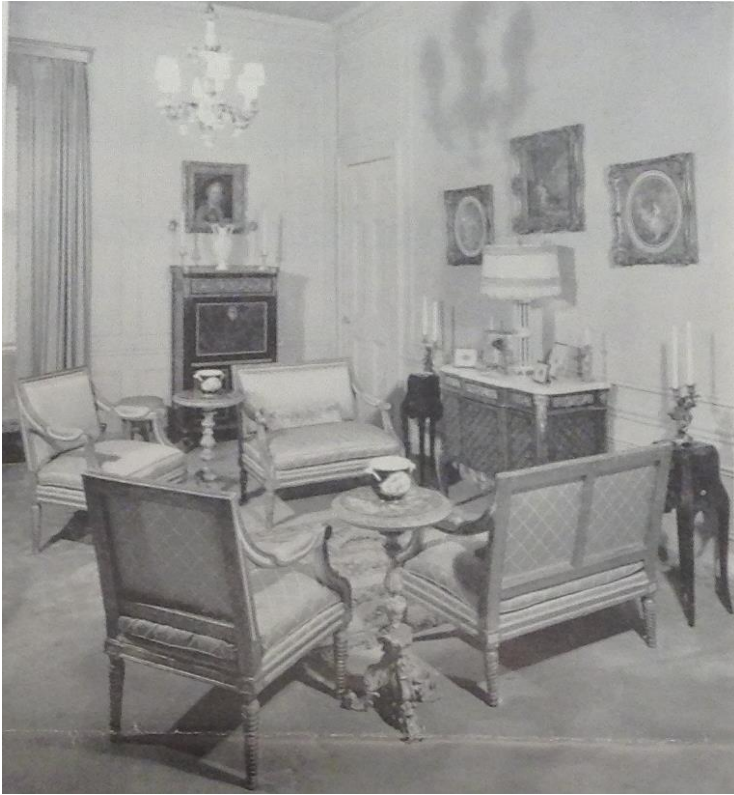
Figure 117:

Watercolor sketch of a two-piece suit by Vionnet inscribed, "worn by Mrs. George Blumenthal to Versailles, France 1938 To The review in honor of the King of England. Museum of the City of New York (inv. no. 39.550.5)



Figure 118:

The “Marie Antoinette room” featured in Mary Ann Payne Robertson’s home. “Living with Antiques, The New York Apartment of General and Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson,” *Magazine Antiques* (January 1961), p. 87.



## Timeline

October 20, 1825: Hermann Blumenthal (George Blumenthal's father) is born in Hessen, Germany.

September 22, 1826: Helene Stiebel (George Blumenthal's mother) is born in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.

January 26, 1842: Marc Eugene Meyer, Florence's father, is born in Strasbourg, France.

1851: Harriet Newmark, Florence's mother, is born.

September 6, 1852: Hermann Blumenthal marries Helene Stiebel in Frankfurt-am-Main.

June 26, 1853: Albert Blumenthal, George Blumenthal's brother, is born in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.

September 11, 1856: Mathilde Blumenthal, George Blumenthal's sister, is born in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.

April 7, 1858: George (Gustav) Blumenthal is born in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.

1859: Marc Eugene Meyer settles in Los Angeles, CA. and works in a dry goods store owned by his cousin, Solomon Lazard (1827-1916), the future founder of the international banking firm Lazard Frères and Company.

1867: Marc Eugene Meyer marries Harriet Newmark, daughter of Los Angeles Jewish pioneer Joseph Newmark.

1873: Florence "Florie" Meyer is born in Los Angeles to Eugene Meyer and Harriet Newmark.

February 27, 1873: George Blumenthal arrives in New York via the Silesia from Hamburg and Le Havre at 17 years of age.

May 8, 1882: George Blumenthal emigrates to the US at 24 years of age via the Elba from Bremen to New York. He is sent by Speyer and Co.

1882: George Blumenthal joins New York branch of Speyer and Co.

February 24, 1882: Armand-Albert Rateau is born in Paris.

1883: Marc Eugene Meyer relocates to San Francisco to become the West Coast manager of Lazard Frères.

1884-1910: 50 East 70th Street is the site of Union Theological Seminary.

1888: George Blumenthal and Eugène Meyer take office at Lazard Frères & Co. in New York.

1890s: Marc Eugene Meyer purchases the dry good store, enlarges it, and names it the City of Paris.

1889: Mary Ann Blumenthal (née Payne) is born in Baltimore, Maryland.

1892-1917: George Blumenthal serves as member of the Board of Trustees of Mount Sinai Hospital, New York.

1893: George Blumenthal becomes senior partner at Lazard Frères.

April 7, 1893: George Blumenthal becomes a naturalized citizen of the U.S. before the Supreme Court of New York.

1893: Eugene Meyer Sr. relocates his family to New York to head the company Lazard Frères.

1893: George Blumenthal joins Lazard Frères.

1893: George Blumenthal is elected secretary of Mount Sinai Hospital, New York.

1893: Eugene Meyer Sr. is offered a partnership in the New York banking house of Lazard Frères and the entire Meyer family, with the exception of Rosalie and Elise, relocates from San Francisco to New York.

1896: George Blumenthal, with four other men, including J. Pierpont Morgan, is part of a syndicate that pledges \$50m to sell foreign exchange in order to avoid further gold exports from the US.

1896: Giovanni Boldini completes a seated portrait of Florence Blumenthal (conserved today at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris and on long-term loan to the French Embassy in Vienna).

January 25, 1898: George Blumenthal marries Florence Meyer in New York.

1898: George Blumenthal Jr. is born in New York.

December 1899 and August 1900: George Blumenthal purchased 339 acres out of 500 in Knollwood in two deeds.

November 1900: George Blumenthal sells his 339 acres in Knollwood to the Knollwood Club.

1901: George Blumenthal and Eugène Meyer resign from Lazard Frères & Co.

1901-1904: George Blumenthal temporarily withdraws from business.

1902: George Blumenthal commissions architects Hunt & Hunt to design a Beaux-Arts house at 23 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street in New York for a total cost of \$75,000.

February 8, 1903: George Blumenthal's father, Hermann Blumenthal, dies in Frankfurt, Germany.

1903: Parisian dealer, J. Goldberg, purchases ten friezes in sculpted wood decorating two rooms of the Castle Vézé Blanco.

1904: J. Goldberg purchases the patio from the Castle Vézé Blanco.

April 1904: George Blumenthal returns to Lazard Frères at 10 Wall Street as senior partner, obtaining the role of associate of the London and Paris branches. He also reserves the right to select his co-directors in New York.

1905: Rateau is appointed director of the decorating studios of the Maison Alavoine & Co., supervising numerous commissions including a residence in New York for George and Florence Blumenthal.

1905: George Blumenthal donates the ivory group "The Rape of the Proserpine" by Simon Troger to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

March 13, 1905: George Blumenthal's mother, Helene Stiebel Blumenthal, dies in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.

November 20, 1905: George Blumenthal is nominated to Fellow of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Perpetuity at a meeting of the Executive Committee.

January 1906: George Blumenthal donates \$100,000 to Columbia College for the endowment of a chair of Politics and creates the George Blumenthal Endowment Fund.

1907: George Blumenthal is elected Vice President of the Board of Mount Sinai Hospital.

February 25-26, 1907: George Blumenthal purchases an early sixteenth-century stone Head of a Woman at the Armand Queyroi sale at Drouot, Paris (lot 131). It is eventually placed in the Blumenthal's *Salle Gothique* on Boulevard de Montmorency in Paris and donated to the Louvre in 1932 (RF 2203).

September 26, 1907: George Blumenthal is injured in a car accident in Paris.

June 26, 1908: Florence Blumenthal offers sixteen works of art, including paintings and sculpture, to the Petit Palais, Paris.

1908: George and Florence Blumenthal's son, George Jr., dies in New York at the age of ten.

1908: Florence Blumenthal funds the George Blumenthal Jr. Fellowship for male and female M.D.'s for study in an American University or abroad under Mount Sinai Director of Laboratories with a stipend of \$1,600 per year.

October 1909: George and Florence Blumenthal donate \$13,000 to Columbia University for the establishment of the George Blumenthal Jr. Scholarship Fund awarded to medical students to cover the cost of tuition, not less than \$250 and not more than \$500 per year.

1909: George and Florence Blumenthal established a fund in their son's name for scholarships and loans to Columbia University medical students.

October 18, 1909: George Blumenthal is elected a Trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Class of 1916).

February 1910: George Blumenthal is appointed a member of a special committee for the reception to be held on March 14, 1910 on the occasion of the opening of the new Decorative Arts Wing funded by J.P. Morgan.

February 21, 1910: George Blumenthal is elected member of the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, along with J.P. Morgan. George Blumenthal is also elected member of the Auditing Committee.

1910: Census records show that George and Florence Blumenthal's home at 23 West 53<sup>rd</sup> consisted of twelve servants, including a valet, a butler and two footmen.

July 1910: George and Florence Blumenthal lend a nineteenth-century painting from their collection to the exhibition *Chef d'oeuvres de l'école française, Vingt peintres du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle* held at the Galerie Georges Petit, Paris.

July 29, 1910: George Blumenthal purchases a significant plot of land along the southwest side of Park Avenue, from 69<sup>th</sup> Street to 70<sup>th</sup> Street, 125 feet on Seventieth Street and 150.5 feet on Park Avenue, from the Union Theological Seminary at a cost of \$300,000. He commissions Trowbridge & Livingston to design a four-story Italian fifteenth-century limestone palazzo at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street at Park Avenue and for their growing collection. Alavoine completes part of the interior decoration.

1910: Eugene Meyer Jr. funds a fellowship for male and female M.D.'s for study in an American University or abroad under Mount Sinai Director of Laboratories with a stipend of \$600 per year.



1911: George Blumenthal is elected President of the Board of Mount Sinai Hospital.

1911: Goodhue Livingston meets George Blumenthal in Paris to examine fragments of the Vélez Blanco Patio (executed by Italian artist in Spain) which Mr. Blumenthal had purchased from the dealer J. Goldberg. The Patio would form the nucleus of his New York residence.

1911: George Blumenthal purchases the Briolette of India (a colorless diamond weighing 90.38 carats) from Cartier in New York that he presents to Florence Blumenthal.

1911-1919: Period of construction of the Blumenthal's home at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street by architects Trowbridge and Livingston and builders Marc Eidlitz and Son.

1911-1938: George Blumenthal serves as President of Mt. Sinai Hospital.

1912: Giovanni Boldini completes a full-length portrait of Florence Blumenthal for her New York residence (conserved today at the Brooklyn Museum of Art).

April 3, 1912: Richard Bouwens van der Boijen, Architect en chef des Bâtiments Civils et Palais Nationaux, is named Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur.

1913: George Blumenthal acquires the Vélez Blanco patio for his Park Avenue residence.

1914: The exterior of the Blumenthal's new residence at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street is completed.

By 1915: George Blumenthal is recorded as Director of the following organizations: American Light & Traction Co.; Insurance Co.; Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Coal Co.; and General Chemical Co.

February 26, 1916: George Blumenthal is elected a member of the Finance Committee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

December 10, 1916: The Parisian dealer Arnold Seligmann writes to the Trustees of the MMA to confirm the shipment of three Gothic architectural elements purchased by George Blumenthal as gifts to the MMA: 1 stone door; 1 big window, 1 small window.

1916: The Beaux-Arts mansion on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street is sold to American heiress and socialite Frances Burke Roche (née Work).

1917: Completion of Blumenthal house at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street.

1917: The plot adjoining the Blumenthal's at 39 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street is purchased by wealthy railroad industrialist Arthur Curtiss James who commissions Allen & Collens to build a house in the English Renaissance style.

By February 1918: George and Florence Blumenthal relocate to their new home on Park Avenue.

1919: Florence Blumenthal establishes the *Fondation Américaine pour la Défense de la Pensée et de l'Art Français* and serves as president.

1919: Artist Jean Dunand (1877-1942), nominated member of the jury of the Fondation Blumenthal, paints a portrait of Florence Blumenthal.

1919: Paul Landowski completes a bronze portrait bust of George Blumenthal (conserved today at Mount Sinai Hospital, New York).

April 1919: George and Florence Blumenthal lend an enameled casket and two Limoges plaques to the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts for an exhibition on French art from the ninth century to the present.

Spring 1919: A.A. Rateau resigns from the Maison Alavoine to establish his own independent decorating company in a townhouse on the Blvd. Berthier in Paris.

By August 1919: The Blumenthal's relocate to their initial Parisian residence at 21, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne in Passy, belonging to Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild.

September 27, 1919: Florence Blumenthal receives médailles d'honneur (au rang d'officier) "*pour belles actions*" from the French government.

October 1919: Paul Landowski completes the marble portrait bust of Georges Blumenthal (conserved today at the MMA).

November 26, 1919: George and Florence Blumenthal and Rateau set sail on the ocean liner La Savoie traveling from France to the US. The three meet aboard and the Blumenthal's become Rateau's first clients. Commissions eventually include furniture and Rococo boiseries for the ballroom and bronze furniture for the patio of an indoor swimming pool in their Park Avenue mansion, as well as commissions for two French residences: the château de Malbosc in Grasse and Le Vieil Arbre, a late 18<sup>th</sup> century townhouse on the boulevard Montmorency in Passy outside of Paris.

December 1919: Rateau returns to Paris after fifteen days in New York.

December 22, 1919: George Blumenthal is awarded the la croix de chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government.

1919-20: The interiors of the Blumenthal's residence at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street are completed.

1920s: Interior photographs taken of 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street.

1920: George and Florence Blumenthal purchase 13-15 Boulevard de Montmorency, named “Le Vieil Arbre” by Florence, in Passy (16<sup>th</sup>), Paris, and commission Rateau to do the decoration, incorporating 18<sup>th</sup> century French furniture, decorative arts, and paintings.

January 24, 1920: plans approved for a three-story pavilion de concierge on the Blumenthal property at 15 Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris (built by architects Bouwens van der Boijen (1863-1939) and Maurice Bouterin in 1920-21).

March 1920: Rateau installs furniture and Rococo paneling in the ballroom and the patio furniture for the pool in the Blumenthal’s New York residence.

March 1920: George Blumenthal purchases a 15<sup>th</sup>-century door from the façade of the hôtel Coeffiers d’Effiat, place Hannequin in Gannat (Allier) from Marc Moity through intermediary antiques dealer Louis Cornillon.

April 20, 1920: File to classify door from the façade of the hôtel Coeffiers d’Effiat as an historic monument is opened.

1920: Rateau officially begins working under his own name.

1920: Paul Landowski completes a plaster portrait bust of Florence Blumenthal (today conserved in the Musée des Années 30, Boulogne-Billancourt). (verify date since she sits for her portrait in 1921)

September 4, 1920: Les Monuments Historiques grants Florence Blumenthal permission to place the porte ogivale from the hôtel Coeffiers d’Effiat in Gannat in her *Salle Gothique* at 15 Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris. It will be classified as an historic monument and its rebuilding will be supervised by an architect from the Monuments Historiques.

1921: George and Florence Blumenthal donate \$350,000 to Mount Sinai Hospital to build an auditorium as a memorial to their late son, George Jr.

1921: George and Florence Blumenthal donate 15,000 francs to the American Hospital of Paris.

April 8-9, 1921: George Blumenthal purchases a 17<sup>th</sup> century French stone sculpture of a Virgin and Child at the Lormier sale at Drouot, Paris, lot 154. It is eventually placed on top of a socle in the Salle Gothique on Boulevard de Montmorency and both are given to the Louvre in 1932 (RF 2201A and RF 2201B).

April 28, 1921: Florence Blumenthal’s first sitting for her bust by Landowski.

June 7-July 10, 1921: George and Florence Blumenthal lend their Fragonard drawing of the Adoration of the Shepherds to *Exposition d’oeuvres de J.-H. Fragonard* to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Pavillon de Marsan, Palais du Louvre.

July 1921: Florence Blumenthal continues to sit for her portrait bust in marble by Paul Landowski in Paris.

July 7-10, 1921: George and Florence lend their Fragonard painting “L’écurie de l’âne” to the Fragonard exhibition held at the Palais du Louvre (Pavillon de Marsan), Paris.

1922: George and Florence Blumenthal begin to acquire additional plots of land along the façade of Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris, purchasing #7.

February 3, 1922: plans approved for construction of the *Salle Gothique* with architectural elements from Ville de Sens (Yonne) and Froville at the Blumenthal property at 15 Boulevard de Montmorency in Paris (Richard Bouwens van der Boijen, Maurice Bouterin, and interior architect L. Cornillon).

July 10, 1922- George and Florence Blumenthal sell a plot of land measuring 1,564 square meters at 36 rue du Docteur Blanche to Michel Lazard, fellow partner of the Paris branch of Lazard Frères.

September 7, 1922: Harriet Newmark, Florence Blumenthal’s mother, dies in New York.

October 1922: Florence Blumenthal commissions Landowski to make a marble sculpture for the MMA.

December 15, 1922: Florence Blumenthal is decorated with the title of *Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur*.

December 18, 1922: George Blumenthal is elected Benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Winter 1922: George and Florence Blumenthal visit Luxor, Egypt where they witness the work of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Expedition.

1923: Casavant Frères installs the organ in the Blumenthal’s Gothic room in Paris.

1923: George and Florence Blumenthal donate 160,000 francs to the American Hospital of Paris.

1923: The New York branch of Lazard Frères moves offices to the Equitable Building at 120 Broadway Avenue, the most prestigious and largest commercial building in Manhattan at the time.

1923: George Blumenthal transfers his seat on the New York Stock Exchange to Frank Altschul.

1923: George Blumenthal presents the University of Paris, or the Sorbonne, with a gift of \$250,000 francs to be used in the interests of science and art.

April 1923: George Blumenthal donates his first cash gift to the Metropolitan in connection with the museum's Egyptian expedition to the tombs of Tutankhamun. He gives \$2000 for the purchase of an automobile for the Luxar camp and the expense for one year of upkeep.

April 7, 1923: Paul Landowski completes the marble bust of Florence Blumenthal in Paris which he shows at the Salon held at the Grand Palais later that month. He was planning to show it at the Salon of 1922, but wasn't yet pleased with the result.

July 20, 1923: Florence Blumenthal creates her holographic will in the presence of notary Robert Revel (the deposit of the will is dated September 24, 1930).

1924- Florence Blumenthal acquires a Claudius Linossier vase c. 1923 at the exhibition of the Société des Artistes Décorateurs at the Grand Palais in Paris.

1924: George and Florence Blumenthal donate 10,000 francs to the American Hospital of Paris for a "George and Florence Blumenthal Room."

1924, George Blumenthal gives \$250,000 francs to the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris.

October 1924: George Blumenthal rejoins Lazard Frères.

December 1924: Adolphe Dechenaud portrait of George Blumenthal is exhibited in a loan exhibition by the Art Patrons of America at the Seligmann Galleries for the benefit of the State Charities Aid Association.

January 5, 1925: Florence Blumenthal acquires a plot of land at 5, Boulevard de Montmorency from the Cuchet Henrioux family.

January 16, 1925: Marc Eugene Meyer, Florence Blumenthal's father, dies in New York.

March 24, 1925: Florence Blumenthal purchases the château de Malbosc, Grasse for 700,000 francs from Aubert-Clément Jacques Parent and his wife Emilie Marie Magdeleine Eugénie Schnetzler.

May 1925: George Blumenthal leaves Lazard Frères without intending to return.

June 5, 1925: George Blumenthal visits Landowski's Exposition and brings Landowski to see the iron furniture that Florence Blumenthal designed in collaboration with Rateau.

October 23, 1925: George Blumenthal acquires a building on the property of 11, Boulevard de Montmorency.

December 5, 1925: Florence Blumenthal purchases additional plots of land in quartier Saint Jean to enlarge the Malbosc property domain from Joseph Louis Ciais and his wife Lucie Marie Martel.

December 1925: George Blumenthal officially retires from Lazard Frères after 21 years as senior partner to pursue a life devoted to philanthropy and art collecting.

1925: The Blumenthal's slowly acquire more of the façade of Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris, purchasing #9.

1925: George Blumenthal donates 1m francs to the Sorbonne to be shared between the Faculty of Letters and Faculty of Sciences.

1925: George and Florence Blumenthal donate 7,500 francs to the American Hospital of Paris for Memorial Beds, Rooms, and Other Dedications.

November 14, 1925: plans approved to construct a two-story communal garage and outbuildings on the Blumenthal property in Paris (Richard Bouwens van der Boijen and Maurice Boutterin).

1925-26: the Blumenthals commission Rateau to decorate the château de Malbosc, near Grasse.

April 16, 1926: Florence Blumenthal acquires a parcel of land measuring approximately 5,000 square meters in quartier Saint Jean to enlarge the Malbosc property domain from Pierre Emile Silvy and his wife Pauline Virginie Angèle Lupi. Florence Blumenthal hires landscape architect Jacques Gréber to transform the gardens at Malbosc.

June 13, 1926: Maurice Boutterin, Architect en chef des Bâtiments Civils et des Palais Nationaux, is named Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur.

September 26, 1926: Mary Ann Payne marries James Blanchard Clews (1844-1934) who became the head of his uncle's banking firm, Henry Clews & Co. They first lived at 1029 Fifth Avenue (and 85<sup>th</sup>) designed by Trumbauer, then moved to 1 East 62<sup>nd</sup> Street.

February 15, 1926: George Blumenthal is re-elected a Trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Class of 1933).

April 1926: George Blumenthal's office moves from 120 Broadway to 49 Wall Street.  
1926: George Blumenthal is awarded the Légion d'honneur from the French Government.

1926: George and Florence Blumenthal donate \$60,000 to the Hôpital des Enfants Malades Necker, in Paris, to build a modern clinic dedicated to Otorhinolaryngology under the direction of Professor Jacques Le Mée.

1926: Florence Blumenthal becomes a member of the committee of the Association France-Amériques in Paris.

1926-1930: Publication of *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal* by Albert Levy.

March 5, 1927: George and Florence Blumenthal make a donation to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France for the installation of electric lighting for the Salle Mazarine.

May 3, 1927: The double door from the hotel d'Effiat in Gannat (Allier) from the Salle de Musique is officially classified as an historic monument.

May 17, 1927: George Blumenthal writes a letter to Dr. Perrimond, Mayor of Grasse, announcing his intentions to donate 750,000 francs to the city of Grasse to create a passable road measuring 6 meters wide between Malbosc and Moulin de Brun, passing Peyloubet and the Nice bridge, known today as the Chemin Blumenthal (Blumenthal Way), on the condition that the land is given at no cost and that the rural track is maintained by the community in the future. Blumenthal also requests that the work is personally supervised by the engineer, Mr. Aimediue, and that it be completed by the firm Joseph Cresp & Cie of Grasse.

May 19, 1927: The Mayor of Grasse responds to George Blumenthal's letter formally accepting his proposal to create a passable road between Malbosc and Moulin de Brun.

December 22, 1927: The Blumenthal's hold a dinner at their home in Paris for twenty-two guests.

1927: George and Florence Blumenthal donate 10,000 francs to the American Hospital of Paris for the 1927 campaign.

October 8, 1928: Florence Blumenthal purchases a plot of land in Grasse, partly uncultivated and in the woods, to enlarge the Malbosc property domain from François Eugène Mathias Maurel and his wife Marie Joséphine Saurin.

October 12 1928: George and Florence Blumenthal establish a fund of \$1 million for the Met to be used for the purposes of the Museum. He stipulated that the income of the fund be added to the principal until both of their deaths, at which time the trustees of the museum were to have the privilege of disposing of both the income and the principal, the only restriction being that the principal must be expended for the purchase of works of art.

October 15, 1928: The \$1m check is given to the Museum's Board of Trustees.



October 17, 1928: Florence Blumenthal is elected a benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art by the Board of Trustees and her name was enrolled upon the tablet in the main hall in perpetual remembrance.

1928: George Blumenthal donates 2,500 francs to the American Hospital of Paris for the Nurses' Fund.

1928: George and Florence Blumenthal commission female photographer, Mattie Edwards Hewitt, to photograph the interiors of the Park Avenue residence.

1929: The Blumenthal's slowly acquire more of the façade of Boulevard de Montmorency, Paris, purchasing #11. The property, with additional neighboring land acquired, finally totals 25,410 sq. meters.

February 1929: George Blumenthal wins 2,350,000 francs (approximately \$91,650) at the Casino in Cannes, France.

March 28, 1929: The Blumenthal's organize a lunch at their home in Grasse for Paul Landowski, the comtesse Witte, and Claude Anet and her daughter.

August 1, 1929: George Blumenthal is promoted to Officier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'honneur for his activity as patron of the arts and for his support to philanthropic organizations.

1929: George and Florence Blumenthal acquire a Louis XV armchair by Michel Gourdin covered in Savonnerie tapestry that they offer to the Louvre (OA 8093).

January 1930: George Blumenthal experiences an attack of gout.

June 11-17 1930: George Blumenthal sells #19-21, Boulevard de Montmorency.

September 21, 1930: Florence Blumenthal dies of bronchial pneumonia at her home on Boulevard Montmorency in Paris.

September 25: friends of the Blumenthals paid their last respects to Florence Blumenthal at 15 Boulevard de Montmorency in Paris.

September 26-October 1: Florence Blumenthal's body is transferred to the American Cathedral in Paris to rest before departing for New York for burial.

October 1, 1930: George Blumenthal returns to New York by boat with his deceased wife's remains for interment.

November 17, 1930: The Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum accepted the bequest of the house and lot at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as its contents, with the accompanying

endowment by Mr. George Blumenthal to be maintained as a branch of the Museum under the title "George and Florence Blumenthal Foundation." The President appointed the following committee consultants to prepare, in collaboration with George Blumenthal, a report to the Board for formal action: Mr. de Forest, Coffin, Taylor, Havemeyer, Root, and Ledyard.

1931: Florence Blumenthal Square in Paris is created as a children's park.

March 12 and 14, 1931: George Blumenthal sells Château de Malbosc, Grasse to Helena Holbrook "Ella" Walker, HSH Princess della Torre e Tasso (1875-1959).

October 19, 1931: George Blumenthal is appointed an additional member of the Met's Special Committee on the Munsey Bequest with J.P. Morgan and Walters.

December 1931: George Blumenthal leaves Edgar Allan Poe books and manuscripts on sale with Rosenbach Company in Philadelphia after he decides to sell his Paris house and contents.

December 30, 1931: Richard Bouwens van der Boijen, Architect en chef des Bâtiments Civils et Palais Nationaux, is promoted to Officier de la Légion d'honneur.

January 18, 1932: George Blumenthal is unanimously elected Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Trustees at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

July 4, 1932: meeting of the committee of the Musées Nationaux to accept George Blumenthal's gift of three important sculptures for the Musée du Louvre (RF 2201-2203).

July 1932: George Blumenthal decides to sell his collection of French 18<sup>th</sup> century books at public auction on December 5-7, 1932 in Paris, retaining a few, finer items to consign with Rosenbach for the American market. Rosenbach recommends their agents Messrs. Ferdinand Bing & Co. to pack the books in Paris.

October 8, 1932: The Trustees of Mount Sinai Hospital host a dinner for George Blumenthal to celebrate his twenty-one years of service as president and forty years as trustee.

November 29-30, 1932: Exhibition held at Galerie Georges Petit in preparation for the first Blumenthal sale and is insured for 8m francs.

December 1-2, 1932: George Blumenthal sells a portion of his 18<sup>th</sup> century art collection from his Paris residence at Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, realizing 8,339,350 francs.

December 1-2, 1932: The Louvre purchases a mounted cache-pot in Chinese lacquer and gilt-bronze c. 1745-49 at the Blumenthal sale (lot 80). The cache-pot comes from the chateau de Bellevue and was moved to Saint-Cloud during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is believed to be part of the same set as the perfume burners (OA 5148).

December 5-7, 1932: Second sale of George Blumenthal collection: "Catalogue de livres illustrés du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle...provenant de la bibliothèque, à Paris, de George Blumenthal," Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, realizing 2,712,655 francs.

1932: George Blumenthal makes a monetary contribution to the Ecole du Louvre, Paris in honor of the school's fiftieth anniversary.

1932: George Blumenthal donates three sculptures to the Louvre: deux personage sous des arcatures, 14<sup>th</sup> c. (RF 2202); Tête de femme c. 1500 (RF2203); and Virgin and Child c. early 16<sup>th</sup> c. (RF 2201).

1933: George Blumenthal writes a widely-publicized letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

1933: Charles Hopkinson (1869-1962) completes an oil portrait of George Blumenthal which was acquired for the Met.

1933: Eugene Meyer Jr. purchases the Washington Post.

February 1933: George Blumenthal donates his 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian lunette painting by Cima de Conegliano showing the Virgin and Child with St Dominic and St Francis (previously in the Blumenthal's New York residence) to the Wallace Collection, London, in the name of George and Florence Blumenthal. The lunette was presented to the Wallace, reuniting it with the Saint Catherine of Alexandria (purchased by Lord Hertford in 1859, becoming part of the Wallace collection in 1900) after a century of separation.

March 1933: George Blumenthal is asked if he would be willing to loan his New York house for two afternoons to aid the Emergency Unemployment Relief Fund at an admission of \$3 per person.

April 1933: George Blumenthal first discusses the idea of presenting stonework from the Salle Gothique in Paris to the Cloisters with MMA director Joseph Breck.

April 5-6, 1933: George Blumenthal sells an additional portion of his collection at Hôtel Drouot, Paris, realizing 566,025 francs.

April 11, 1933: Breck transmits Blumenthal's offer of stonework from his *Salle Gothique* in Paris to John D. Rockefeller, estimating the cost would not exceed \$10-15,000.

Summer 1933: Breck selects certain pieces of stonework from George Blumenthal's Paris home for the Cloisters, estimating transport to be \$2,500.

June 6-7, 1933: George Blumenthal sells an additional portion of his collection at Hôtel Drouot, Paris, realizing 66,834 francs.

June 19-20, 1933: George Blumenthal sells an additional portion of his collection at Hôtel Drouot, Paris, realizing 151,052 francs.

June 28, 1933: George Blumenthal sells an additional portion of his collection at Hôtel Drouot, Paris, realizing 204,345 francs.

July 28, 1933: Rockefeller authorizes expenditure and paid the final bill for the shipment of Blumenthal stonework from Paris, totaling \$2,563.77.

August 2, 1933: Joseph Breck, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, dies.

December 1933: William Sloane Coffin, 6<sup>th</sup> President of the Metropolitan Museum, dies.

January 9, 1934: George Blumenthal is elected the seventh President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

January 22, 1934: The Metropolitan Museum of Art invites guests to meet the new President, George Blumenthal, at the Museum's Restaurant.

1934-1941: George Blumenthal serves as the 7<sup>th</sup> President of Metropolitan Museum of Art.

1934-1941: The Cloisters are constructed. In 1935, George Blumenthal donates French Gothic architectural elements from the *Salle Gothique*.

1934: James Rorimer goes to Paris and finds that there is a great deal more stonework from Blumenthal's Paris residence that could be useful in the Cloisters than Breck had previously selected.

July 5, 1934: George Blumenthal offers the Musées Nationaux the 15<sup>th</sup> century stone door from l'hôtel d'Effiat that he used as part of the Salle Gothique 15 boulevard de Montmorency (RF 2389). If the Louvre didn't acquire it, it would have been offered to the Met.

August 1934: Ivins discusses the additional shipping costs with Nelson Rockefeller who conveyed that his father is agreeable to Rorimer's plan of bringing over four Blumenthal windows for the Late Gothic Hall. Stonework is shipped and charges totaling \$1,042.95 (for 1934), plus \$5,550.87 (for 1935).

October/November 1934: Duveen arranges appointments for British politician, art collector and philanthropist, Sir Alfred Beit, to visit the New York collections of George Blumenthal (October 29), Henry Goldman (October 30), Philip Lehman (Nov 1), and Andrew Mellon (Nov 7).

January 16, 1935: The Musées Nationaux officially announces George Blumenthal's gift of the stone door from l'hôtel d'Effiat in Gannat and proposes to use it in the future planning of the sculpture galleries at the Louvre.

April 1935: George Blumenthal lends "The Crucifixion" tapestry to the Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles.

Summer 1935: Casavant organ from the Blumenthal's home on boulevard de Montmorency, Paris was re-installed in a new monastery in the Abbaye de la Pierre Qui Vire's foundation at the Abbaye Saint-Benoit d'En Calcat in the Tarn.

June 12, 1935: George Blumenthal is awarded honorary degree of Doctor of Fine Arts at New York University.

December 12, 1935: George Blumenthal donates shares of stock for the MMA's employees pension fund.

December 18, 1935: At the age of 77, George Blumenthal marries Mary Ann (Marion) Payne Clews (widow of banker James B. Clews).

DATE: George and Mary Ann Blumenthal endow the George and Marion Blumenthal Research Scholarship at the University of Southern California for demonstrated merit in community arts leadership (awarded annually by the Roski School of Fine Arts).

1935: A Rolls-Royce Phantom Brewster Riviera is purchased for Ann Blumenthal (possibly as a wedding gift) with coach lamps with her initials and Marchal headlamps and is sent to 15 Boulevard Montmorency, Paris.

1935: The MMA spends \$5,550.87 transporting stonework from the Blumenthal's Paris residence to the Cloisters. 4 windows from Sens and some elements from the Froville cloisters are shipped to New York.

1936: The Blumenthal Pavilion at the Children's Hospital in Paris is torn down.

November 1936: George Blumenthal donates twenty-one fine art fellowships to New York University's graduate school.

August 1937: George Blumenthal presents the NYPL with a valuable collection of original editions of the works of French authors bound by Gruell, including Anatole France, André Gide, Paul Valéry, Pierre Loti, the Comtesse de Noailles, Lamartine, etc.

1937: George Blumenthal donates 12,000 francs to the administration of the Musées Nationaux to create a course focused on contemporary art in Europe and North America. The donation was managed by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux and was placed under the direction of André Dézarro, curator of musée des Ecoles étrangères.

1937: George and Marion Blumenthal Research Scholarships awarded annually for demonstrated merit in community arts leadership by the Roski School of Fine Arts at the University of Southern California.

April 26, 1937: MMA director Herbert Eustis Winlock writes to George Blumenthal to discuss the possibility of 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street becoming an outpost of the MMA. Architectural elements and works of art before 1720 would come to the MMA itself.

1938: A.A. Rateau dies.

1938: Kate Sturges Buckingham leaves 11 interior photographs of the Blumenthal's Salle Gothique, Paris c. 1921 to the Art Institute of Chicago following her death in 1937. She donated her own collection of medieval sculpture, tapestries, and decorative arts to Art Institute in 1924, where they were installed in a "gothic period room," named in Buckingham's honor.

February 7, 1938: The Jeu de Paume inaugurates a new chair position under the direction of André Dézarro to teach one course per month on the evolution of contemporary painting abroad funded by George Blumenthal. The course was supplemented by conferences with other international figures, such as Monsieur Maraini, Deputy of the Italian parliament, who discussed "l'Art et l'Etat en Italie: forms corporatives et syndicales," and Monsieur Marinetti from the Royal Academy in Italy who discussed "Le Futurisme et l'Aéro-peinture." The chair position disappears during WW2.

April 1938: George Blumenthal retires as head of Mount Sinai Hospital after 27 years as president.

December 12, 1938: Madame Paul Weill sells her collection at Hotel Drouot in Paris, including a drageoir in Chantilly porcelain with silver mounts purchased from the April 1933 Blumenthal sale in Paris.

1938-1941: George Blumenthal is elected President emeritus of Mt. Sinai Hospital.

February 1939: George Blumenthal is re-elected to the office of president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

April 17, 1939: Mary Ann Blumenthal is elected a Benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in recognition for her gifts.

1939: George Blumenthal joins the Honorary Committee for the "Masterpieces of Art" exhibition at the New York World's Fair.

February 19, 1940: George Blumenthal is re-elected Trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (to serve until 1947), as well as President, member of the Executive Committee, and Alternate Chairman of the Finance Committee of Trustees.

February 19, 1940: George Blumenthal is re-elected Trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Class of 1947. He was also elected member of the Executive Committee and Alternate Chairman of the Finance Committee of Trustees.

Summer 1940: George and Mary Ann Blumenthal travel to the West Coast (California, Portland, Seattle) and Canada (Victoria, Vancouver), as well as Chicago.

By October 1940: The Blumenthal property at 15 Boulevard Montmorency in Paris is owned by Société Civile Immobilière "Libération" (20 rue Saint-Didier, Passy). The Ecole d'Hydrographie de la Marine was considering buying the property.

November 27, 1940: notification of George Blumenthal's illness is conveyed to Mr. Taylor, Director of the MMA, and of his request that Museum matters not be referred to him until further notice.

May 19, 1941: George Blumenthal writes to Metropolitan's Board of Trustees, as a survivor of Florence Blumenthal, to eliminate any conditions on the \$1m gift made to the Museum in 1928 and declares, upon his death, that the George and Florence Blumenthal Fund shall become part of the general endowment fund of the Met.

June 1941: Objects from the Blumenthal objects begin to arrive at the Met under the heading "Gift of George Blumenthal" and "Bequest of George Blumenthal."

June 26, 1941: George Blumenthal dies in New York at the age of 83.

June 30, 1941: Funeral of George Blumenthal held at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street at 10 am.

September 13, 1941: 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> street is appraised at \$815,000, his total estate appraised at \$8m.

February 3, 1942: Ann Payne Blumenthal relinquishes her two-year ownership of the New York house.

March 26, 1942: The Met petitions surrogate James A. Foley to retain the Blumenthal house for 5 years or for 2 years after WW2 (whichever is longer).

July 21, 1942: The Met installs a collection of arms and armor in the Blumenthal house and opens the exhibit to the public three afternoons per week, free admission, until after the war when the patio would be dismantled and the rest of the house was to be torn down.

May 18, 1942: all of the objects of art bequeathed to the Met by the late George Blumenthal, with a few exceptions, are received at the museum.

1942-1944: Blumenthal house used for Arms & Armor exhibition, as well as Met storage.



1943: Ann Payne Blumenthal donates a handful of 18<sup>th</sup> century French decorative arts purchased by George and Florence Blumenthal to the Metropolitan Museum and lends the portrait of George Blumenthal by Adolphe Dechenaud.

November 9--March 1, 1943: "Masterpieces in the Collection of George Blumenthal, A Special Exhibition" is held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

1943: Ann Blumenthal marries General Ralph Kenyon Robertson (1883-1964).

January 21-22, 1944: Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson consigns objects from the collection of the Late George Blumenthal for sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York.

August 1944: The German troops evacuate Le Vieil Arbre, the former Blumenthal residence in Paris.

1945: Ann Payne Blumenthal renounces life interest of remaining objects purchased by George and Florence for the New York house from the 1941 bequest and gives them to the Metropolitan Museum.

Summer 1945: Blumenthal Patio was removed from Blumenthal house. Remaining decorative interiors were sold by the Metropolitan Museum of Art to French & Co.

August 15, 1945: Demolition of the Blumenthal house begins by Albert A. Volk Co. and lasts 80 days. The Met retains the Patio and paneling from two rooms.

February 15, 1945: Preston Remington (curator) writes a letter to Taylor (Director) listing the objects included in the Gift and Bequest of George Blumenthal that have little value to the Met. Because the house is going to be torn down, he recommends selling items to French & Co. and asks permission to have Mitchell Samuels (founder) look at the entire lot.

By April 1945: The Blumenthal property on Boulevard de Montmorency in Paris is occupied by a military training school.

December 1945: The Monegasque group Société Civile Immobilière Libération purchase the Blumenthal property at 15 Boulevard de Montmorency in Paris and constructs an immense, luxurious residence of 450 apartments on six floors with vast interior gardens known as la Villa du Parc de Montmorency.

January 30, 1946: Blumenthal house sold to 422 West 29<sup>th</sup> Street Corporation.

November 1946: Robert Lehman acquires George Blumenthal's 19<sup>th</sup> century German brass chandelier (previously in the Blumenthal house in Paris) through French & Company in New York.

Post WW2: The mansion at 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street is demolished and the proceeds from the sale of the land go to the MMA.

1947-1948: Construction of 710 Park Avenue (site of 50 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street).

August 25, 1948: Maurice Bouterin, Architect en chef des Bâtiments Civils et des Palais Nationaux, is named Officier de la Légion d'honneur.

1949: A twenty-story apartment building on the site of the former Blumenthal residence at East 70<sup>th</sup> Street is completed.

June 1950: Sale of Blumenthal Aeolian pipe organ to Croteau Organ Co., New York for \$500.

December 22, 1952: Demolition of 15 Boulevard Montmorency, Paris. Classification of the Salle de Musique as historic monument is stopped.

1962: Mary Ann Blumenthal (Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson) donates a group of French decorative arts to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York under the credit line "Mary Ann Payne Foundation Inc.

April 1963: MMA hires Barlow-Meagher Co. to erect the Blumenthal Patio.

1964: General Ralph Kenyon Robertson dies.

April 14, 1964: dedication of the Blumenthal Patio at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mayor Wagner presented Mary Ann Payne Robertson with a medallion in her honor.

April 29, 1966: Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson consigns eighteenth-century French furniture from the estate of the late George Blumenthal for sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York.

May 14, 1966: Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson consigns English furniture from the estate of the late George Blumenthal for sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York.

June 3, 1966: Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson consigns English and French furniture from the estate of the late George Blumenthal for sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York.

September 17, 1966: Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson consigns silver and English and French furniture from the estate of the late George Blumenthal for sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York.

October 1966: Mary Ann Payne (Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson) renounces her life estate in certain works of art bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by George Blumenthal and other works of art given by her subject to the reservation of a life estate.

November 11-12, 1966: Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson consigns French furniture from the estate of the late George Blumenthal for sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York.

December 10, 1966: Mrs. Ralph K. Robertson consigns French furniture from the estate of the late George Blumenthal for sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York.

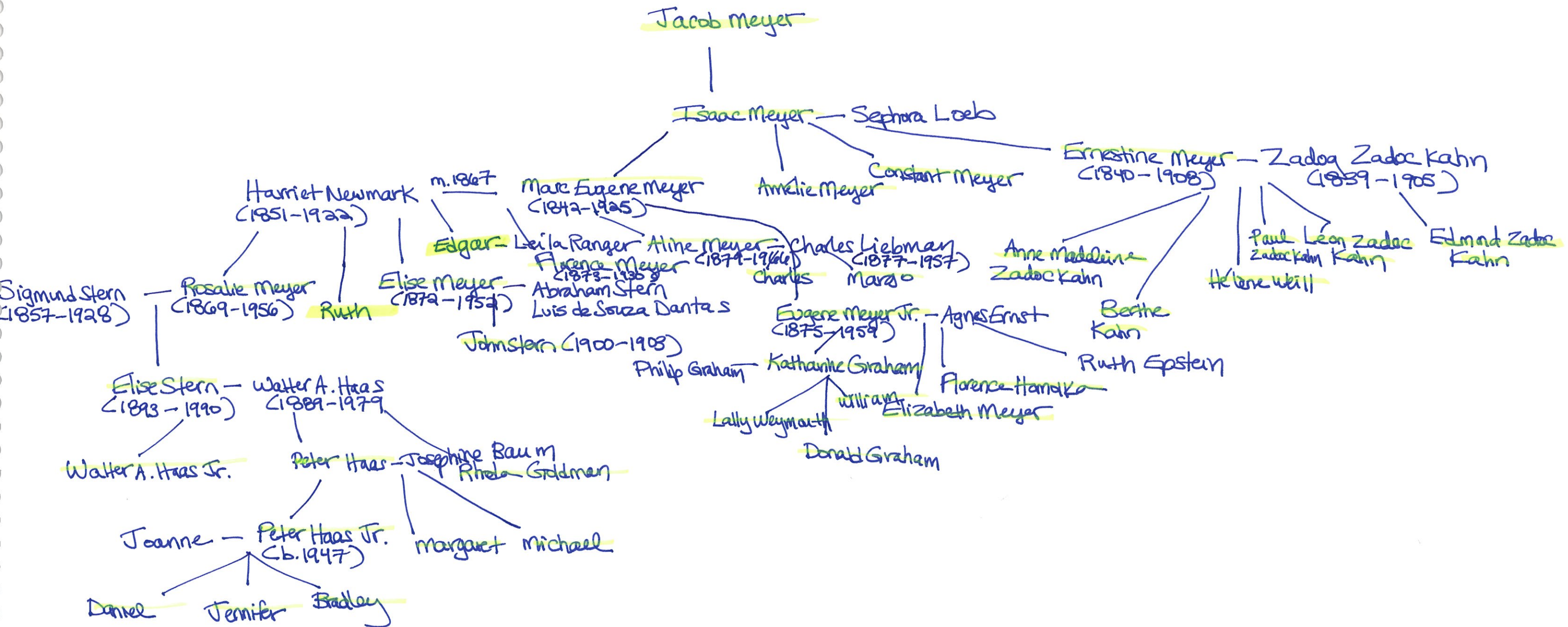
1969: Ann Robertson marries her fourth and final husband, Baron Carl von Wrangell of California. She thus became known as Baroness Charles P. Wrangell-Rokassowsky.

1975: The Établissement Médical du Château de Malbosc sells the property to ADAPEL.

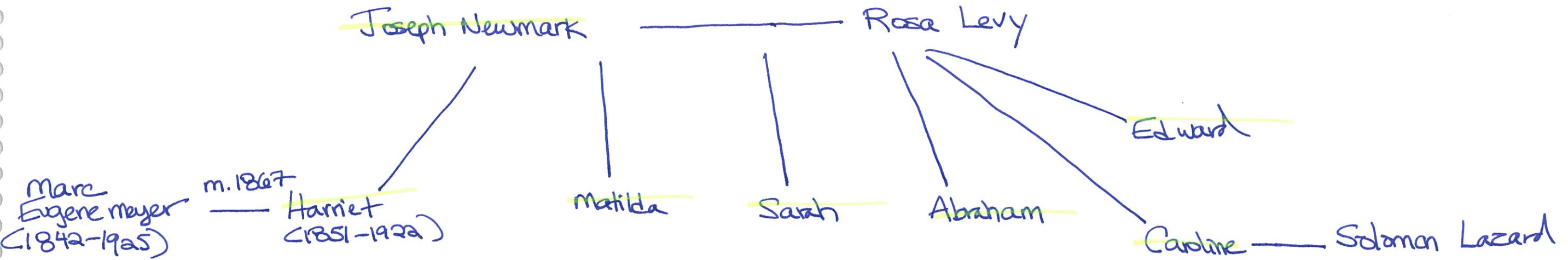
1976: MoMA announces its Museum Tower project and demolishes the former Blumenthal residence on 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, as well as other townhouses nearby, over limited preservationist protest.

July 22, 1991: European Sculpture and Decorative Arts Department, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchases the Blumenthal scrapbook containing correspondence to George and Florence Blumenthal, memorabilia and newspaper clippings for £800 from: Denise Michael of East Sussex, UK.

## Meyer Family Tree



# Newmark Family Tree





# Blumenthal Family Tree

