

## THE GIFT OF THE MICHAEL FRIEDSAM COLLECTION

Michael Friedsam, in acquiring objects of art, had these aims constantly in view: to assemble a collection of paintings by representative artists which would illustrate the development of the art of painting, stressing particularly the work of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries but not ignoring that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to supplement them with fine examples of the decorative arts; to enrich the City of New York by the permanent possession of these collections and thus to enhance its prestige as one of the most important art centers of the world; and to make available to students in New York these works of art which he had brought together primarily for their particular study and inspiration.

By his will Colonel Friedsam left his collections to his executors with the request that the objects therein be given by them to that institution in New York City which, in their judgment, would permanently realize these aims. He indicated his preference for The Metropolitan Museum of Art. After careful study and frequent conference with its officers, the Executors presented the collection to this Museum on December 3, 1931.

The wide range of its contents is indicated by an enumeration of the sections into which the following survey has been divided: Paintings—French Primitives, Netherlandish Primitives, German Paintings, Italian Paintings, Flemish and Dutch Paintings of the XVII Century, Paintings of the XVIII and XIX Centuries; European Decorative Arts—Sculpture, Ceramics, Enamels, Crystals, Metalwork, Jewels, Furniture, Tapestries and Textiles; Oriental Decorative Arts—Chinese Porcelains, Jades, and Other Semiprecious Stones, Japanese Arms, Near Eastern Decorative Arts. The collection also

includes a Roman head of a boy, thirteen early American prints representing presidents and statesmen, and 156 books chosen from Colonel Friedsam's library, at the invitation of the Executors, for departmental use. Of the quality of the collection such masterpieces as Brouwer's *The Smokers*, Van der Weyden's *Lionello d'Este*, Duplessis's *Benjamin Franklin*, *The Annunciation* by Petrus Cristus, Vermeer's *Allegory of the New Testament*, and Bellegambe's triptych, *Virgin Enthroned*, are evidence. Equally prized among the objects of decorative art are the Limoges enamels of the sixteenth century and the Renaissance bronzes, crystals, jewels, and maiolica.

The following letter, which constitutes the deed of gift from the Executors of the Michael Friedsam estate to the Museum, states the conditions which have been accepted willingly by its Trustees and also shows clearly the spirit of sympathetic cooperation of the Executors and their ready comprehension of modern museum problems and policies. The Trustees of The Metropolitan Museum of Art join enthusiastically with the Executors in their aim to render these collections "not static" but dynamic in the life of New York City.

WILLIAM SLOANE COFFIN.

To the Trustees of The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art:

Under his Will, Colonel Friedsam entrusted his Art Collection to his Executors to be given to such institution in the City of New York as his Executors might deem best. The Colonel expressed a preference for The Metropolitan Museum of Art. In his Will, he also expressed a wish that his Collection should preserve its individual identity. Colonel Friedsam appreciated the difficulty experienced by public institutions in

accepting gifts with limitations as to the uses thereof. At the same time, he felt that his Collection had sufficient importance to warrant the continuance of its existence as an entity. He particularly felt that much of his Collection might be of great usefulness in spreading a knowledge of Art among laymen as well as in assisting in the teaching of Art among students. The Colonel was greatly interested in education. As a matter of fact, his residuary estate is to be devoted among other things to "the care and education of the young."

Bearing in mind the Colonel's wishes and desires as to his Collection and his interests in education, his Executors submit the following proposition:

We offer you the pictures on the list annexed. We also offer you such items out of the Colonel's Collection of porcelains, tapestries, rugs, enamels, crystals, marbles, bronzes, antique furniture and objects of Art as you may within three months from the date hereof designate. This entire gift must be kept by the Museum as The Friedsam Collection and each item clearly and permanently so labeled. A selection of objects, which shall serve as a nucleus, or central part of the collection, shall be shown

in a gallery by themselves, not necessarily the same gallery; it being understood that said objects shall not be static, but may be changed from time to time. At the same time recognizing that it may be desirable from time to time to use or lend certain items from this Collection for special exhibitions or for special services, either in your own institution or elsewhere, the Executors are willing that such loans or uses may be made by you from time to time provided, however, that such loans be made for definite periods of time and that they contemplate the ultimate return of the loaned articles to the Museum. The Executors would also require that whenever any object is so loaned by the Trustees of the Museum the object so loaned must be properly marked and designated as being a part of The Friedsam Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

ESTATE OF MICHAEL FRIEDSAM.

(Signed) John S. Burke

Executor.

Ed. C. Steiner

Executor.

Clarence W. Wood

Executor.