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The Bartletts and the *Grande Jatte*: Collecting Modern Painting in the 1920s

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HAD Frederic Clay Bartlett died in 1924, leaving his entire collection to The Art Institute of Chicago, he would be forgotten today, overshadowed even in Chicago by Arthur Jerome Eddy and Annie Swann Coburn.¹ Yet, he is remembered today as one of the great American collectors of modern art for a gift he made to the Art Institute in 1926 and added to in 1927, 1928, and 1932. In the short period between 1924 and 1928, he became a major collector. He began as an amateur, buying minor works by fashionable artists as souvenirs and gifts. By 1928, however, he could be ranked with such figures as Madame Hélène Kröller-Müller from Holland and Samuel Courtauld from England.² A great collector in a decade of great collectors, Bartlett embarked on a career that was intimately bound up in the purchase of a single work of art, Georges Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (fig. 1).

This purchase was made in 1924 by a man who had, only one year earlier, become a trustee of The Art Institute of Chicago, and it seems to have been made with

FIGURE 1 Georges Seurat (French, 1859–1891). *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, 1884–86. Oil on canvas; 207.6 × 308 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection (1926.244).



that institution in mind. Hence, it was not in the least a private purchase. Indeed, the *Grande Jatte* never hung in any of the several houses and apartments owned or rented by the Bartletts. It was sent directly to the Art Institute, where it has remained ever since, except for three short exhibitions in Minneapolis, Boston, and New York.³ It entered the permanent collection of the museum in January 1926, only a year and a half after its purchase. There was, at that date, no work by Seurat in a public collection in France.

What happened to transform a conservative painter of decorations who spent most of his time traveling throughout Europe and America into a serious collector? The answer is not easy to find but perhaps can be discovered by situating Bartlett's collecting in the larger context of European and American taste for modern art in the mid-1920s. Certainly, this decade was the heyday for the market in Post-Impressionist and "modern" paintings. Although low by today's standards, prices for works by artists like Gauguin, Cézanne, van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, and even Matisse, Braque, and Picasso had risen sufficiently to ensure that there was no problem finding works by these artists in supply. In the almost virgin market of the 1920s, many of the greatest masterpieces of modern art changed hands. Several dozen men and women had both the business acumen and the finances to seize this opportunity and, fortunately for Chicago, Frederic Bartlett and his wife Helen Birch Bartlett were among them.

We must keep in mind, however, that they were not alone. Indeed, there were other courageous collectors in Chicago, as well as in New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Washington, D. C., Brussels, Oslo, and Otterlo. The names are legion: John Quinn, Justin K. Thannhauser, Oskar Reinhardt, Chester Dale, Max Pellerin, Daniel Tzanck, Charles Pacquemat, and the Comte de Beaumont. They all bought from the same dealers, confided secrets to the same agents, and vied for the same masterpieces. Sometimes—as in the case of the *Grande Jatte*—the Bartletts won. Other times, as we shall see below, they lost. Such are the fortunes of the collector. Although Frederic met Samuel Courtauld, there is no evidence that either of the Bartletts knew any of their other major competitors personally.⁴

The story of the purchase by Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett of Georges Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* has been told many times, and each version varies in its dates and details. According to the most recent telling, which is also the most incorrect, the painting was bought for \$22,000 in 1921 while the Bartletts were in the midst of a trans-Atlantic crossing. The deal, we are told, was consummated by cable.⁵ An earlier version of the tale, published in 1932 in *The Chicago*

Visitor, is different, and more accurate, in every respect: Bartlett and his wife met Lucie Cousturier, the owner of the painting, in 1924, just one year before her death in 1925. Seeking to create a pension fund for her retirement through the sale of the painting, her principal asset, she countered the Bartlett's offer of \$12,000 with a final price of \$20,000. At this point in the narrative, Mr. Bartlett himself is cited:

We went to our hotel considering this offer and talked it over for a long time, wondering how we could trim our expenses, cutting out this and that contemplated purchase. The more we talked, the more determined we became to possess this masterpiece. Finally, our minds were made up and we arose at an unearthly hour the next morning and went over and made the purchase.⁶

Unfortunately, the author listed no source for this statement, but the fact that it appears to be a direct quotation published in Chicago within Bartlett's lifetime leads one to accept it as true.

The scanty records that do survive corroborate all details of this early account. They tell us that Bartlett did pay \$20,000 for the painting, although he insured it for \$25,000 just after its purchase.⁷ We also know that it arrived at The Art Institute of Chicago, shipped separately from its stretcher and probably rolled, on July 7, 1924, indicating that the purchase was made no later than the spring of that year. And, we know from numerous sources that the seller was Lucie Cousturier, who had owned the painting for more than twenty years and whom we see posed "au japonais" in a famous photograph in front of Seurat's painting while it was still in her collection (fig. 2).⁸

These few facts record what could be the most important transaction in the history of the Art Institute, as well as the single greatest event in the lives of Frederic and Helen Bartlett. All the evidence tells us that this purchase was neither natural nor easy. None of their earlier acquisitions can compare in either aesthetic or monetary value, and there are many indications that they were certainly not the first to attempt to purchase the work that has come to be known as the greatest French painting outside of France. Forbes Watson, a brilliant American critic, indicated in an article on the Bartlett Collection published in 1926 that The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, had attempted to buy the painting as early as 1911, but that its trustees refused to support the acquisition.⁹ A letter on file in the Department of European Painting tells us that the English economist and Bloomsbury figure John Maynard Keynes had tried to buy the *Grande Jatte* in the early 1920s at the urging of artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant.¹⁰ No doubt, there were other potential buyers,

FIGURE 2 Lucie Cousturier (French, 1876–1925), posed before the *Grande Jatte*, which she owned from c. 1891/94 to 1924.



because the existence of Seurat's painting was scarcely a secret in the 1920s.

The fact that the painting was of interest to collectors other than Bartlett is certainly proof of the brilliance of the purchase; the purported failure of the Metropolitan to acquire the *Grande Jatte* has often been cited by passionate Chicagoans as proof of the wisdom of their city. Other local commentators have noted that a French syndicate offered the Art Institute \$400,000 for the painting in 1931 so that it could be returned to France, and that, in 1953, its insurance value was set at \$1,000,000. Even today, the museum is often asked to assign a monetary value to this priceless work of art. Thus, for many, the painting's value seems to prove more mightily than the intense competition for it that the Bartletts were correct!

Unfortunately, we know nothing about how or from whom the Bartletts found out about the availability of the painting, where they saw it, and why they bought it. All accounts suggest that the purchase was made privately, without the intercessory advice of a dealer. Indeed, the only name associated with the purchase other than Bartlett's is that of the shipper, Lerondelle, who arranged to have the painting packed and sent to Chicago.¹¹ The mystery surrounding the Bartletts' acquisition of the *Grande Jatte* contrasts with the process involved in every other purchase for the collection, for no other acquisition seems to have been made privately. Instead, Bartlett shopped for pictures, visiting dealers who

did the work for him. Thus, it is most likely that, in the negotiations for the Seurat, an anonymous intermediary was involved.¹²

Analysis of Bartlett's collecting habits before and after the acquisition of the *Grande Jatte* proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that this decision radically changed his attitude toward works of art. Fortunately, paintings from the Bartletts' personal collection went in and out of the Art Institute during the 1920s, providing us with a fair indication of their taste.¹³ Before the summer of 1924, the Bartletts bought, and probably traded, many small paintings by artists of the School of Paris for prices ranging from \$50 to \$500. These were used as "decorations" in their various homes and apartments in Chicago, New York, Massachusetts, and Florida. All of these works were purchased at fashionable galleries in Paris, Munich, and New York. After acquiring the Seurat, however, Bartlett made a series of major purchases: van Gogh's *Bedroom at Arles*, Toulouse-Lautrec's *At the Moulin Rouge*, Picasso's *Old Guitarist*, and Cézanne's *Basket of Apples*—all truly staggering in quality.

Even before 1924, the Bartletts knew what they were doing. They bought from the "right" dealers—Léonce Rosenberg, Paul Guillaume, Percier, and Bernheim-Jeune in Paris; French Galleries (a subsidiary of Wildenstein) and Knoedler in New York; Thannhauser in Munich; and Theodore Fisher in Lucerne. And they

bought—in a certain sense, at least—the “right” painters. Mostly contemporary, but conservative, the paintings were by French artists like Herbin, de la Fresnaye, Utrillo, Derain, Lhôte, Lotiron, Dunoyer de Segonzac, Friesz, and Beaudin. Yet, from today’s vantage point, this is hardly an inspired list; many of the paintings seem to have been small and only marginally significant within the careers of these then-fashionable artists. In fact, none of the works acquired before the *Grande Jatte* could be considered essential to the history of modern art. They were, in the end, private collectors’ pictures, appropriate for the embellishment of the cultivated domestic environments of the international rich during the heady years before the Depression.

There were, however, exceptions. It was in Bartlett’s choice of an important 1922/23 painting by Henri Matisse, *Woman Before an Aquarium* (fig. 1, p. 200), and van Gogh’s *Madame Roulin Rocking the Cradle* (fig. 3), both of which arrived at the Art Institute in separate shipments in August 1923, that we see the first glimmerings of his future brilliance as a collector. However, the Bartletts continued their essentially fashionable buying of contemporary art early in 1924, when works by the Spanish Cubist Pruna, paintings by Friesz, Pascin, Dunoyer de Segonzac, and Lotiron, as well as the superb double portrait of Jacques Lipchitz and his wife (fig. 1, p. 188) by Modigliani, were shipped to Chicago by Galerie Percier in Paris. Later that year, the Bartletts bought paintings by Severini, Herbin, and Hodler from dealers in Paris, New York, Chicago, and Lucerne. All of this was accomplished before the deal was struck with Lucie Cousturier.

The evidence suggests that the Bartletts recognized immediately that *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* could never look truly “at home” at home. It is surely no accident that Bartlett began to collect with an institution in mind after he was appointed in 1923 to succeed his father as a trustee of the Art Institute. Many of his earliest documented purchases were made on a buying trip with his fellow trustee, Robert Allerton, which commenced in the spring of that year, and the *Grande Jatte* was acquired less than a year after his elevation to trusteeship. As a trustee, he was required to think more seriously about the museum than he had as a passionate amateur. In 1924, Bartlett made a correct and, given his income, courageous decision to form a small collection of masterpieces that, surrounding the *Grande Jatte*, could make it make sense. Of the paintings he already owned, only those by Matisse and van Gogh were truly comparable. He began to buy well, and expensively, using larger and larger amounts of his income. Quality rather than quantity became his obsession. In a certain sense, this decision was inevitable. What, after

FIGURE 3 Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890). *Madame Roulin Rocking the Cradle (La Berceuse)*, 1888. Oil on canvas; 92.7 × 73.8 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection (1926.200).

all, could one select to hang among the Herbins and Dunoyer de Segonzacs in his collection with so towering an aesthetic achievement as the *Grande Jatte*?

Bartlett started his “quality” collection rather oddly, buying two figure paintings by the Swiss artist Ferdinand Hodler, one of which, *James Vibert, Sculptor*, is outstanding. In Chicago, he found a Hodler landscape, *The Grand Muveran* (on Bartlett’s Hodlers, see pp. 167–87). In the aesthetic world of high society in 1924, Hodler and Seurat did not exist in the same realm, and perhaps the inclusion of these Swiss paintings in a French context is the single most original aspect of the collection. The Bartletts’ other purchases were less eccentric—van Gogh’s small, early view of Montmartre (see p. 227) was bought in the spring of 1925 and Gauguin’s Tahitian masterpiece *Day of the Gods* (fig. 4) was purchased in the summer or fall of the same year.

The Bartletts’ paintings were exhibited at The Art Institute of Chicago in 1923, 1924, and 1925. In 1925, they traveled to the Minneapolis Institute of Art, whose director, Russell Plimpton, later made brilliant purchases of Post-Impressionist art for this museum; and to the Boston Art Club. While the connections to Boston were numerous (the Bartletts spent summers in nearby Beverly), those to Minneapolis are perhaps more interesting. Plimpton was one of the most important museum directors in the Midwest during the 1920s, and the fact that he wrote to Bartlett asking for the loan of the collection indicates that they knew each other. Plimpton’s later acquisition of works by Gauguin, Cézanne, and Seurat for the Minneapolis museum was clearly made in response to the Bartlett Collection after it was given to The Art Institute of Chicago.¹⁴

While the collection was in Minneapolis, Bartlett was acquiring other great paintings, several of which he added to the exhibition in Boston. In Boston and Minneapolis, pamphlets were produced, and the collection was called the Birch-Bartlett Collection of Modern French Paintings.¹⁵ The inclusion of Helen Birch Bartlett’s maiden name in the collection title has still never been adequately explained. The surviving correspondence in the Art Institute’s Archives about the collection—its purchase, exhibition, shipment, and insurance—was directed to Frederic. Since this must reflect the prevailing sexism of the 1920s, it cannot be used as proof that he alone was responsible for the collection.





FIGURE 4 Paul Gauguin (French, 1848–1903). *Day of the Gods*, 1894. Oil on canvas: 68.3 × 91.5 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection (1926.198).

One thing, however, is clear: Helen Birch Bartlett died in October 1925 of cancer, indicating that several key purchases were made during her last illness, possibly as a form of memorial.

Helen's death seems to have accelerated Frederic's purchases: indeed, they became more costly and confident. He was already negotiating for what was to become his most expensive acquisition, Cézanne's *Basket of Apples*, in the months surrounding her death, and there is little doubt that the price he paid, \$50,000, was a record for a work by that artist in 1925–26. How different a purchase this was from those made just before the *Grande Jatte*: \$100 for a Pruna, \$250 for a Lotiron, \$500 for a Utrillo.

In her will, Helen Birch Bartlett left the collection to the Art Institute; shortly after her death, her husband arranged for the collection to become a memorial gift. The make-up of the Birch-Bartlett Collection was not defined precisely at the time of its acceptance by the museum in January 1926. After its accession by the museum, several minor paintings, by Dunoyer de Segonzac, Friesz (see fig. 9, p. 93), and Utrillo, were sold and major works by van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, Rousseau, and Picasso were added. The number of objects it contained was honed to twenty-four. Indeed, the works were so carefully selected that they hang with as great an authority today as when they were first installed (see pp. 94, 95, 96).

We can draw several conclusions from this story. First, the acquisition of the *Grande Jatte*, Bartlett's association with the Art Institute, and his wife's premature death gave an institutional character to what had begun as a private collection. Second, Bartlett was willing and able to pay very high prices for works of art, placing himself squarely in competition with other major collectors of modern art. Third, he developed his taste around certain dealers of School of Paris and Post-Impressionist painting, never really accepting Cubism and the geometric abstract styles of avant-garde art in Paris during the mid-1920s.

After he acquired the *Grande Jatte*, he bought major works by each of the other Post-Impressionist masters—Gauguin, van Gogh, Cézanne, and Toulouse-Lautrec—as well as paintings by the masters of monumental form who followed in their stead. Apparently, he was never moved by the work of Vuillard and Bonnard, despite the fact that he made purchases of works by Matisse from their primary dealer, Bernheim-Jeune; his collecting never extended to the Cubist works of Picasso and Braque or to the then avant-garde paintings of Léger and the Purists. For the Bartletts, modern art was essentially Post-Impressionist figure painting brought forward into the twentieth century.

Most histories of private collecting deal with the actual purchases made by those collectors, analyzing them for the aesthetic and social attitudes they reveal. Looked at in this way, the Bartletts participated in the conservative, socially cautious collecting world exemplified by French Galleries in New York and Bernheim-Jeune in Paris. It is clear that their decision not to buy truly avant-garde painting was an aesthetic one. Indeed, the Bartletts could easily have formed an entire collection of Cubist paintings for what they spent on the Seurat and the Cézanne alone. If Bartlett was forming a history of modern art from Seurat to the present, as many people thought, it was a skewed and partial history. Far from being a “personal” collection with idiosyncratic choices, it reflected a “solid,” socially acceptable taste for masterpieces of exactly those Post-Impressionist painters who had been given retrospective exhibitions and had been validated by both critics and art historians for more than a generation. The Bartletts were not like the Potter Palmers, who boldly bought works by the Impressionists as they were painted.

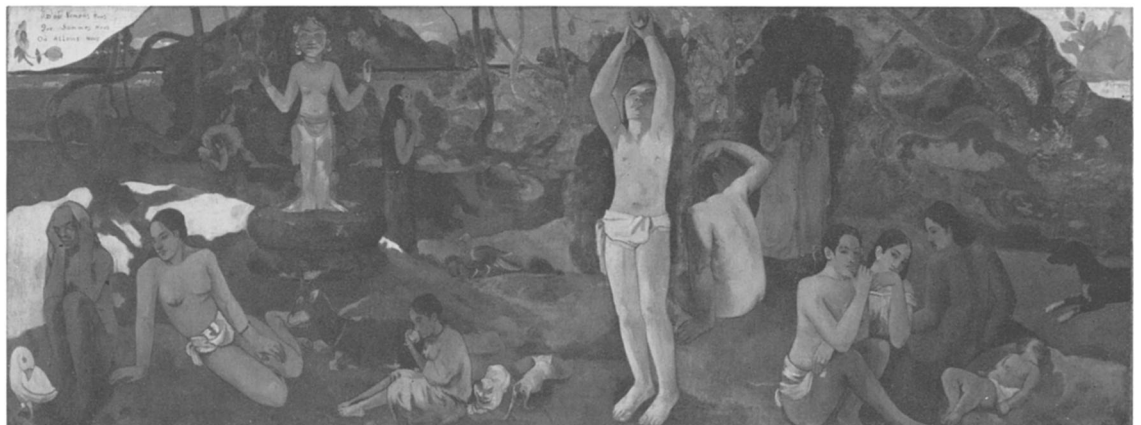
Because Bartlett's taste was conservative and institutional, all but one of the paintings he bought for the collection after the death of his wife were painted in the nineteenth century. Given the extraordinary market for Post-Impressionist painting in the 1920s, we must ask how successful a collector he really was. In certain cases, he was brilliant; he found *At the Moulin Rouge*, the best Toulouse-Lautrec available in the 1920s (see pages 115–35), which he probably saw first at The Art Institute of Chicago, where it was shown in 1924 in a small exhibition of the artist's works. He tried to buy Seurat's late masterpiece, *The Circus*, from the Quinn Collection, only to discover that Quinn had bequeathed it to the Musée du Louvre!⁶ Bartlett is also reported to have made a stab at Manet's great composition *The Bar at the Folies Bergère*, which was bought in 1924 by Samuel Courtauld. Indeed, there are indications that he was the major competitor of Courtauld, who bought Seurat's *Bathers at Asnières* for the Tate Gallery in London in 1924, just after Bartlett bought the *Grande Jatte*.

While Bartlett's Cézanne is a beautiful and important late still-life, it is not comparable in quality to the *Grande Jatte* or Toulouse-Lautrec's *At the Moulin Rouge*. Had he been able to get to Paris in the spring of 1926 to see the Cézanne retrospective at Bernheim-Jeune Gallery, he could have bought the greatest late painting by that artist, *The Large Bathers* (fig. 5), now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Then in the Pellerin Collection, this masterpiece, like others by Cézanne, was accessible during the peak period of Bartlett's collecting. He could also have bought Gauguin's greatest painting,



FIGURE 5 Paul Cézanne (French, 1839–1906). *The Large Bathers*, 1906. Oil on canvas; 208.3 × 251.5 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, W.P. Wiltstach Collection (W37-1-1). Photo: J. Rishel, *Cézanne in Philadelphia Collections*, exh. cat., Philadelphia Museum of Art (1983), p. 46.

FIGURE 6 Paul Gauguin. *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*, 1898. Oil on canvas; 139.1 × 374.6 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Tompkins Collection.



Where Do We Come From? . . . (fig. 6), now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and on the art market in 1925–26. Instead of what could have been another milestone purchase, Bartlett bought in May 1927 a fine late group portrait (see p. 228) by that artist from Thannhauser in Munich for \$9,000.

His early Picasso, *The Old Guitarist* (see fig. 1, p. 152), purchased in May 1926 from French Galleries for \$9,500 (it had previously been in the Quinn Collection), was a wonderful choice, especially considering the fact that Picasso's earliest paintings were neither well known nor well published at the time. The large picture by the Douanier Rousseau, *The Waterfall* (see p. 230), was bought from Georges Bernheim for \$8,000 in March 1926. While perhaps not the artist's very best, it was nonetheless a solid purchase, among the finest of his large "jungle" landscapes. And, although his Matisse's (see pp. 201–21), bought before the *Grande Jatte*, have stood up well, he could have acquired even greater paintings by this artist in the active market of the mid- and later 1920s. Bartlett's purchase of *Bedroom at Arles* (see pp. 137–51) by van Gogh was made from French Galleries in December 1926 for the high price of \$17,500 (just \$2,500 less than the *Grande Jatte*). Perhaps the single most important painting of van Gogh's Arles period, this was another brilliant acquisition, given the fact that the largest group of works by van Gogh still in the artist's family's private collection had not yet been exhibited.

Even a cursory analysis of Bartlett's purchasing suggests very specific patterns. He wanted representative works of each major "genre" explored by the masters of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century painting. Of van Gogh, Bartlett owned a still life (currently considered to be a forgery), a landscape, a portrait, and the great interior. Of Gauguin, he owned a landscape and a portrait. Of Hodler, he owned a landscape, a portrait, and a figure study. Of Toulouse-Lautrec, he had a major painting and a decoration. Of Seurat, he had the *Grande Jatte* and had tried to secure *The Circus*. The single failure of the collection, which Bartlett tried to correct, was with Cézanne. Without a masterpiece like the Philadelphia *Bathers*, he needed to represent the Provençal master's figurative painting. In November 1927, he wrote to Art Institute director Robert Harshe:

I have been hunting for the past few years for a portrait by Cézanne and perhaps I have found it in the so-called Fabbri portrait of a boy Portrait of M.G. 1880 [fig. 7]. . . . This Portrait I can purchase for \$36,000.00 and have asked Mr. Stransky to send it out to the Institute as I wish to see it in the Memorial Room before making up my mind further. Will ask you to put it in safe storage at the Institute until I can come out to Chicago at the end of the month. Would



FIGURE 7 Paul Cézanne. *Boy in a Red Waistcoat*, 1893/95. Oil on canvas; 89.5 × 72.4 cm. Upperville, Va., collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

like very much to have Mr. Ryerson's opinion and that of the Art Committee. It seems like a high price, but as Cézanne portraits go it is fairly moderate in price, also it is a very well known canvas and to me very solid and complete and of monumental quality.¹⁷

For unknown reasons, the painting was shipped back to New York. Early in 1928, Bartlett tried again: a self-portrait by Cézanne was sent to the Institute on approval from Buffalo, where the museum had not been able to raise money for its purchase.¹⁸ This picture is impossible to identify with precision and, like the portrait of a boy, was shipped back to New York. Today, we regret this loss.

Between his wife's death and February 1928, Bartlett

spent over \$100,000 on the collection, and his interest then seems to have shifted to the proper installation of his works. He may have rejected the two works by Cézanne because they failed to harmonize effectively with those already in the collection. Indeed, Bartlett became obsessed by the pictorial unity of the memorial collection, and he worked hard choosing the correct moldings, frames, colors, and spacings for the paintings.¹⁹ For this reason, it must have become increasingly difficult to add works to the collection. The longer it remained in its own gallery, the more “habitual” and, ironically, private it became.

We know from all descriptions and photographs of the first installations in the Art Institute that the room was stripped of extraneous decorative moldings, that the walls were painted an off-white, that the picture frames were white (or, in at least one case, “grayed”), and that there was ample space between the individual works of art. In this “neutral,” modernist environment, the paintings were intended to glow harmoniously and to interact among each other rather than against their environment.

The fact that Bartlett’s collecting came essentially to an end in 1928 is regrettable.²⁰ Bartlett lived until 1953, but he never collected again with the passion, intensity, and sense of quality that drove him for four years after the hotel-room decision to acquire Seurat’s *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*.

NOTES

1. For a brief summary of the roles of Eddy, Coburn, and other early collectors in the growth of the Art Institute’s permanent collections, see Patricia Erens, *Masterpieces: Famous Chicagoans and Their Paintings* (Chicago, 1979), pp. 100–14. See also “The Arthur Jerome Eddy Collection of Modern Paintings and Sculpture,” supplementary catalogue with preface by Daniel Catton Rich, *Bulletin of The Art Institute of Chicago* 25, 9 (Dec. 1931), pt. 2.

2. On the Kröller-Müller Collection, see “The Collections,” *The Kröller-Müller Museum* (Haarlem, 1978), pp. 25–32. For a discussion of Samuel Courtauld and the development of his collection, see Canberra, Australian National Gallery, in association with the Courtauld Institute Galleries, London, “Samuel Courtauld and the Courtauld Collections,” *The Great Impressionists: Masterpieces from the Courtauld Collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Paintings and Drawings*, exh. cat. (1984), pp. 9–14.

3. After the painting entered the permanent collection of the Art Institute, it left the museum only once, to go to a major Seurat exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (Mar. 24–May 11, 1958), after being in the same exhibition at the Art Institute (Jan. 16–Mar. 7, 1958). In the catalogue, the

entire composition was featured as the frontispiece and a detail used on the cover (see The Art Institute of Chicago, *Seurat Paintings and Drawings*, ed. Daniel Catton Rich; essay by Robert L. Herbert, 1958). On the exhibitions in Minneapolis and Boston, see note 15 below.

4. The best study of the collecting system in Paris, on which much of this account depends, is Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930* (New York, 1981), esp. Chap. 5, pp. 154–204 (on collectors), and Chap. 3, esp. pp. 88–100 (on collector-dealers). Bartlett referred to a conversation with Courtauld in a letter to Robert Harshe, July 12, 1933 (The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives).

5. Erens (note 1), p. 104. How Bartlett came to know of the Seurat has not yet been determined. Although there is no positive evidence that Bartlett saw it, the 1884 oil study for the *Grande Jatte* was exhibited in Chicago at the Arts Club in 1919. See The Arts Club of Chicago, *Exhibition of French Post-Impressionists* (Chicago, 1919), no. 19.

6. Walter J. Sherwood, “The Famous Birch Bartlett Collection,” *The Chicago Visitor* (Oct. 1932), pp. 16–17, 40.

7. Uncatalogued insurance list, Oct. 29, 1924, as per a lost letter from Frederic Bartlett of Oct. 27, 1924, The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives.

8. For further biographical details about Lucie Cousturier, an important art historian, artist, and collector, see Ellen Wardwell Lee, *The Aura of Neo-Impressionism: The W. J. Holliday Collection*, exh. cat., Indianapolis Museum of Art (Indianapolis, 1983), pp. 92–95 (artist’s biography by Tracey E. Smith).

9. Forbes Watson, “A Note on the Birch Bartlett Collection,” *The Arts* 9 (June 1926), p. 304.

10. Letter from Quentin Bell to John Maxon, Jan. 15, 1973, The Art Institute of Chicago, Department of European Paintings files.

11. Receipt, July 7, 1924, The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives.

12. It is possible to speculate about the identity of this intermediary dealer. It was, perhaps, Paul Guillaume, who also acted as the New York agent for the great Philadelphia collector Albert Barnes, and from whom Bartlett purchased other paintings. For more on Guillaume and American collectors, see Gee (note 4), pp. 63–64.

13. This reconstruction of the formation of the Bartlett Collection is based on lists of various transactions concerning the Bartletts’ paintings that went through the Art Institute; these are in The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives.

14. On Russell Plimpton and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, see Richard R. Brettell, “Diversity of French Nineteenth Century Painting,” *Apollo* 117 (Mar. 1983), pp. 238–40.

15. The *Grande Jatte* was exhibited at the Minneapolis Institute of Art between April and September 1925 (see Minneapolis Institute of Art, *Exhibition of Modern French Paint-*

ings from the Birch-Bartlett Collection, checklist no. 9; and the *Bulletin of the Minneapolis Institute of Art* 14 [Apr. 1925], pp. 31–32). In the Minneapolis museum checklist, the painting is described as “the most stunning example of Seurat’s works and an excellent illustration of the ‘dot’ method of painting, which he invented.” It was also shown Dec. 9–16 of that year at the Boston Art Club (see Boston Art Club, *Birch-Bartlett Collection of Modern French Paintings*, checklist no. 26).

16. Bartlett mentioned his interest in *The Circus* in a letter to Robert Allerton, Oct. 27, 1924, The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives.

17. Letter from Frederic Bartlett to Robert Harshe, Nov. 14, 1927, The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives. On the Cézanne

portrait, see Lionello Venturi, *Cézanne: son art—son oeuvre* 1 (Paris, 1936), p. 211, no. 682, as *Garçon au gilet rouge*, 1890–95.

18. Telegram from Frederic Bartlett to Robert Harshe, Feb. 14, 1928, The Art Institute of Chicago, Archives.

19. Bartlett discussed his approach to installation in a lengthy letter to Robert Harshe (see note 4). See also the essay by Courtney Donnell in this issue of *Museum Studies*, “Frederic Clay and Helen Birch Bartlett: The Collectors,” pp. 94–95.

20. Bartlett did add one major painting by Toulouse-Lautrec, *Ballet Dancers*, to the collection in 1932, but this was an isolated event.