



Guy Wildenstein, President, Wildenstein & Co., Inc.



19 East Sixty-fourth Street



Gallery Lobby

A HISTORY OF THE WILDENSTEIN GALLERY

The term “art dealing” takes on a whole different meaning when one thinks of Wildenstein & Co. The family-owned and -operated art firm began in France more than 130 years ago when Nathan Wildenstein, a tailor by trade, decided that he would devote his life and his earnings to his true love, the buying and selling of fine art. Nathan didn’t set out to leave a legacy that would see his firm develop into one of the premier international art dealerships in the world, yet that’s what Wildenstein & Co. is today.

The company’s founder spent every penny he could spare on building up an inventory. When his Paris apartment became too small to store the works he had assembled, his wife, Laure Lévy, advised him to rent a shop, and in course of time he was catering to an impressive clientele. By the turn of the twentieth century, Nathan Wildenstein had a full-fledged business, which was generally considered to be one of the three foremost European art purveyors specializing in works of the Old Masters. Laure oversaw the ledgers, prepared invoices, and kept track of correspondence. In 1905, Wildenstein opened a sumptuous gallery at 57, rue La Boétie, and in 1903, the company opened an affiliate in New York. By the late 1930s, Nathan’s only son Georges expanded his interests to include Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, in which he ultimately specialized, both as a dealer and as an art historian.

Today, Wildenstein & Co. has holdings of art dating from between the thirteenth and the twentieth centuries. It can pride itself in having placed in private and public collections works by such masters as Fra Angelico, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rembrandt, Hals, Rubens, Van Dyck, Bernini, El Greco, Velázquez, Murillo, Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Watteau, Chardin, Boucher, Fragonard, Houdon, Goya, David, Ingres, Corot, Courbet,

Rodin, Pissarro, Degas, Cézanne, Manet, Monet, Renoir, Caillebotte, Redon, van Gogh, Gauguin, Bonnard, Klimt, Munch, Maillol, Brancusi, Matisse, Picasso, and Henry Moore.

Wildenstein has also gained a reputation for presenting museum-quality exhibitions, such as a show of more than sixty paintings by Claude Monet that took place in the spring and early summer of 2007. Art critics heralded the event as an opportunity for art lovers to see superb examples of this French Impressionist’s work and to view masterpieces that had rarely or never been seen publicly. The event was praised because it was the most comprehensive Monet retrospective held in New York in recent decades and because all proceeds from ticket sales benefitted The Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

Part of the Monet show’s appeal was the space in which the paintings were shown. In 1930, the Wildensteins purchased the land on East Sixty-fourth Street, near the corner of Madison Avenue. They commissioned Beaux-Arts architect Horace Trumbauer to design and build a gallery, which is as elegant today as it was in 1932, when it first opened its doors. When you stroll by the building, you will marvel at the beauty of its limestone façade. Inside, the marble staircase with an iron and gilt-bronze handrail and the oak-paneled elevator are works of art in their own right. In this location, Wildenstein & Co. initiated a program of “blockbuster” exhibitions. A number of them promoted the French art of many centuries that the gallery held in its vaults. And today, the art of France remains a staple at Wildenstein. The current generations of Nathan’s descendants remain dedicated Francophiles. The family’s love of the country of their origin and their devotion to the propagation of its culture through scholarly research and publication have been consistent and profound. Recently, to celebrate the centennial of its establishment in



Raffaello Sanzio, called Raphael (Italian: 1483-1520)
Madonna and Child with Book, c. 1502-1503
Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena, California (M 1972.2.P)



Vincent Van Gogh (Dutch: 1853-1890)
Portrait of Patience Escaler, 1888
Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena, California (M 1975.06.P)



Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish: 1577-1640). *Portrait of the Artist with His Wife, Helena Fourment, and Their Son, Peter Paul*, c. 1639. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Wrightsman)



Jean Honoré Fragonard (French: 1732-1806). *The Warrior ("Figure de Fantaisie")*, c. 1770. The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts



Jacques-Louis David (French: 1748-1825). *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuilleries*, 1812. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1961.9.15)



Pierre-Auguste Renoir (French: 1841-1919). *The Daughters of Catulle Mendès*, 1888. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (The Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Collection, Partial Gift, 1998.325.3)

New York City, Wildenstein mounted *The Arts of France from François I^{er} to Napoléon I^{er}*. Ambitious both in its scope and its depth, the show offered the public a stunning visual survey of French art from 1500 to 1815—oil paintings, watercolors, pastels, drawings, sculpture and tapestries—and it met with high critical acclaim.

True to Nathan Wildenstein’s visionary spirit, in 1993 Wildenstein & Co. entered the field of contemporary art in a joint venture with the prestigious Pace Gallery. The merger created PaceWildenstein, also based in New York, which represents major living artists and the estates of preeminent figures of contemporary or near-contemporary American and European art.

In conjunction with The Wildenstein Institute, located in Paris at 57, rue La Boétie, Wildenstein & Co. sponsored the publication of more than forty critical catalogues of the works of great artists of various schools. Among its more recent achievements are the vast Monet, Gauguin, Vuillard, and Pissarro catalogues. In 2005, the Institute embarked on the preparation of its first catalogue devoted to the work of a contemporary artist, the American Jasper Johns.

Wildenstein provides a number of services to its clients, including research and photography, the storage of artwork, and bidding at public auctions. The gallery also serves as intermediary between museums requesting the loan of works of art and collectors who prefer to maintain their anonymity.

Wildenstein continues to emphasize the aesthetic and historical significance of the works of art it handles. ■

All paintings illustrated here were at one time handled by Wildenstein & Co.

Enjoy visiting Wildenstein & Co., Inc., which is located in Manhattan at 19 East Sixty-fourth Street—Tel. 212 879-0500 and Web site www.wildenstein.com.