Sally Webster and David Schwittek

A Digital Recreation of the Lenox Library Picture Gallery: A Contribution to the Early History of Public Art Museums in the United States

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Abstract:
> The genesis of this digital reconstruction of the Lenox Library Picture Gallery is nine archival photographs (ca. 1882) that replicate the installation of the paintings owned by the New York bibliophile and art collector James Lenox. This three-dimensional, interactive platform allows easy access to the paintings and their history. The primary goal is to demonstrate that Lenox's picture gallery is representative of the pre-Gilded Age era, when issues such as collecting and installation practices in the United States were coming to the fore and curatorial strategies were becoming articulated.

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Introduction | [Scholarly Essay and 3D model](#) | [Project Narrative](#) | [Appendices](#)

This digital humanities project, "A Digital Recreation of the Lenox Library Picture Gallery: A Contribution to the Early History of Public Art Museums in the United States," contains several parts. Its principal element is the three-dimensional model of the Lenox Library Picture Gallery as it appeared in the 1880s. Within this virtual environment are varied functionalities: links that connect the paintings to the accompanying text, the ability to see the gallery from different angles, pre-programmed arrangements of paintings that illustrate juxtapositions stated in the text, and an information (or text) panel for each painting accessible by clicking on each individual painting. Included in a given text panel is the title of the painting, the name of the artist, and other tombstone information, as well as short explanatory content. There are two complementary articles: the scholarly essay, "A Digital Recreation of the Lenox Library Picture Gallery: A Contribution to the Early History of Public Art Museums in the United States," and the project narrative. The scholarly essay focuses on the paintings and curatorial strategy found in James Lenox's (1800–80) picture gallery analyzed within the context of the establishment of the first public museums in the United States. The essay also has links to the nine archival photographs, to individual paintings, and to groups of paintings with shared affinities. The project narrative documents the history and construction of the project. Other materials include appendices containing a list of engravings, auction data, and an itinerary of Lenox's travels.

Sally Webster is professor emerita of American art at Lehman College and the Graduate Center, CUNY. An authority on historic murals, monuments, and American visual culture, her latest book, *The Nation's First Monument and the Origins of the American Memorial Tradition*, was published in 2015 by Routledge. Most recently she contributed an article, "The Lenox Library: New York's Lost Treasure House," to the anthology *New York: Art and Cultural Capital of the Gilded Age* (New York: Routledge, 2018). In addition, she co-authored an essay on the history of modern mural painting for *A Companion to Public Art* (Chichester and West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016) and co-edited a special issue on murals for *Public Art Dialogue* (2014).

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