

New York in the Gilded Age



The 'Gilded Age' – a term first coined by Mark Twain referring to the vast fortunes of financiers and entrepreneurs such as Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, J P Morgan, and the dynasties of the Vanderbilts, Astors, and Rockefellers in the 1890s.

Who were the movers and shakers of artistic patronage in this fascinating and volatile period of social mobility northwards up the grid of Manhattan? Where did they live? Who painted their portraits for posterity and adorned their chateaux-like mansions on Millionaire's Row (Fifth Avenue)?

This lecture explores the identities of an international elite of artists and designers, such as John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn, Giovanni Boldini and Paul-César Helleu – artists who felt equally at home in New York, London, or Paris working either for titled patrons or for the conspicuous consumption requirements of 'new money'. Borrowing Edith Wharton's prescient phrase 'Keeping up with the Jones's' we will call in on the Vanderbilt Ball of 1883 and eavesdrop on the conversations around us.





