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## **The Deliberate Ambiguities of Isabella Stewart Gardner**

After visiting the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum there was no doubt in my mind that Isabella Stewart Gardner was nothing but a brilliant woman, art collector and architect. Though these arguments are the emphasis on the Boston Globe article when justifying Isabella's will, should it prevent the demolition of the Carriage House and the construction of the museum's beautiful new facilities?

Entering a museum with no deliberate grouping of paintings by date, tags or insight on the artists lives renders an unique refreshing experience. Though I normally enjoy reading a museum's body of text I must admit I felt the very comfortable with the lack of information gifted by Isabella's choice, perhaps even alleviated by having my aesthetic preferences rewarded by the feeling they are respected. Though the lack of information makes a objective statement on Isabella's interpretation that art is comprised of it's aesthetic, the uniqueness of the museum's experience makes it worth such unconventional choice. The lack of information is also forgiven by the time periods of the art displayed at the museum. Art movements that challenges the aesthetic importance of visual arts such as conceptual and pop art didn't dominate art culture until later decades, meaning the art displayed would have been created with no deeper intentions then to aesthetically please the viewer.

The experience of visiting the museum is often expressed as an portal into a different timeline. However a more accurate description would be to call it a portal to multiple timelines and countries due to the overwhelmingly eclectic

collection of art and architectural features. This often ignored feature of the museum can alter the public's perception that we are to do what Isabella would want to the museum. It is possible Isabella would have kept adding to her estate with paintings and architectural devices of future generations including contemporary ones.

My experience walking through the new building further enforces my belief this construction was beneficial. It not only increases the generational contrast between the house and the new entrance but it also influenced me to return to it multiple times due to the extra comfort it offers, such as dining possibilities and the ability to easily advertise the museum to potential visitors by allowing me to purchase a museum related gift at their new gift shop. These comforts which are now common features of contemporary museums are essential to the maintenance and funding of preserved properties in cities with ever growing populations.

If taking the stance that we are not to attempt interpreting Isabella's potential wishes, valuing the museum as a "public property" controlled by the Gardner Foundation it becomes even harder to justify the necessity for the Carriage House, a part of the property which was never open to the public.

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is an unique facility because the visitor's experience is directly connected to Isabella herself. Though her will leaves questions in regards to the recent renovation, I believe that as the ambiguities of looking at a painting without knowing it's author the ambiguities on Isabella's will should be respected as a choice of conviction, leaving future generations to make the decisions in regards to her unspoken wishes for her illustrious gift to the city of Boston.