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Autore	Trask Jeffrey
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Sommario/riassunto	American art museums of the Gilded Age were established as civic institutions intended to provide civilizing influences to an urban public, but the parochial worldview of their founders limited their democratic potential. Instead, critics have derided nineteenth-century museums as temples of spiritual uplift far removed from the daily experiences and concerns of common people. But in the early twentieth century, a new generation of cultural leaders revolutionized ideas about art

institutions by insisting that their collections and galleries serve the general public. *Things American: Art Museums and Civic Culture in the Progressive Era* tells the story of the civic reformers and arts professionals who brought museums from the realm of exclusivity into the progressive fold of libraries, schools, and settlement houses. Jeffrey Trask's history focuses on New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, which stood at the center of this movement to preserve artifacts from the American past for social change and Americanization. Metropolitan trustee Robert de Forest and pioneering museum professional Henry Watson Kent influenced a wide network of fellow reformers and cultural institutions. Drawing on the teachings of John Dewey and close study of museum developments in Germany and Great Britain, they expanded audiences, changed access policies, and broadened the scope of what museums collect and display. They believed that tasteful urban and domestic environments contributed to good citizenship and recognized the economic advantages of improving American industrial production through design education. Trask follows the influence of these people and ideas through the 1920's and 1930's as the Met opened its innovative American Wing while simultaneously promoting modern industrial art. *Things American* is not only the first critical history of the Metropolitan Museum. The book also places museums in the context of the cultural politics of the progressive movement-illustrating the limits of progressive ideas of democratic reform as well as the boldness of vision about cultural capital promoted by museums and other cultural institutions.
