NEW YORK CITY — Henry David Thoreau’s simple green desk where he wrote Walden and the essay known as “Civil Disobedience“, along with 18 additional Thoreau artifacts, were carefully packed this week by the Concord Museum’s collections team for a maiden journey to New York’s Morgan Library & Museum, where they will be part of “This Ever New Self: Thoreau and His Journal,” a joint exhibition between the Concord Museum and the Morgan Library & Museum. Thoreau’s desk, which has never left his hometown of Concord, will be part of the most comprehensive exhibition ever created about Thoreau. The exhibition is currently on view, running until September 10 in New York; the exhibition will be on view at the Concord Museum from September 29 to January 21, 2018.
David Wood, curator of the Concord Museum and author of An Observant Eye: The Thoreau Collection at the Concord Museum, explained, “Thoreau’s green desk was made in Concord in 1838 by a cabinetmaker who charged about a dollar for it. Thoreau kept it with him all his life, wrote on it daily, and kept his journal locked inside it. The part the desk played in American’s intellectual history is all out of proportion to its humble form. It’s interesting to note that in all likelihood Thoreau’s green desk has never before been more than two miles from the shop it was made in.”

Some of notable artifacts that the Concord Museum shipped to New York include an ambrotype image of Thoreau (this is one of two photos in existence); his walking stick, flute, and spyglass; his copy of the Bhagavad-Gita; as well as numerous other items.

Thoreau is best known as the author of Walden, universally acknowledged as one of the great books of American literature, and “Civil Disobedience”, one of the most influential essays in the worldwide democratic tradition. Both were written on this desk.

Wood said, “The Concord Museum has for more than 130 years been responsible for the great majority of the artifacts associated with Henry Thoreau’s life in Concord. The manuscripts aren’t here, but, largely through the agency of Henry’s sister Sophia, the objects are.”

The Morgan Library & Museum is at 225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street. For information, 212-685-0008 or www.themorgan.org.

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