



PRESS RELEASE

from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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UNIQUE SUMMER VIEWING OPPORTUNITY FAMED FRAGONARD PANELS PLACED IN SKYLIT ILLUMINATION OF EAST GALLERY DURING GALLERY RELIGHTING AND REFURBISHMENT OF FRAGONARD ROOM

Through September 23, 2007



Fragonard panels in the East Gallery, The Frick Collection, New York, photo: Michael Bodycomb

For the first time since their arrival at the Frick mansion in 1915, the principal panels of Jean-Honoré Fragonard's Progress of Love series can be seen in dramatically different, partly-skylit illumination and outside of their long-standing gallery installation. These monumental works are a major attraction at the museum, and they have been temporarily placed on view in the East Gallery while the Fragonard Room undergoes its first major relighting and refurbishment in

seventy-five years. The six panels currently on view in the East Gallery are accompanied by a remarkable set of seating furniture carved by one of the most important chairmakers of the eighteenth century, Nicolas Heurtaut (1720–1771). Not often on view, these four chairs and two canapés still bear their original Beauvais tapestry upholstery, the designs of which are after Oudry and Boucher. The frames and tapestries have been traced back to their creation in the 1760s for a client named Francois de Bussy, a career diplomat serving the French royal court. The panels are joined by two very important commodes—highlights from the Frick's furniture collection—that are customarily on view in the Fragonard Room. On



Canapé by Nicolas Heurtaut showing Beauvais tapestry cover after Boucher. The Frick Collection, New York, photo: Michael Bodycomb

the south wall stands a neoclassical mahogany veneered example by French Royal furniture maker Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806), an exact contemporary of Fragonard who was in great favor with Marie-Antoinette through the abolition of the monarchy (examples of his work for her can be found nearby in the South Hall of the Frick). The collaborative brilliance of royal ébénistes Gilles Joubert (1689–1775) and Roger Lacroix (1728–1799) is in evidence on the north wall of the East Gallery in the form of a commode created in 1769 for Madame Victoire, fourth daughter of Louis XV. Considered one of the finest in existence, it is a beautiful example of transitional furniture, displaying rococo features through its curvilinear form—a serpentine front and cabriole legs—and the forward-looking neoclassicism of its magnificent marquetry and gilt-bronze mounts.

A newly acquired Oushak carpet covers much of the large oak floor, suggestive of the way the rooms of the mansion appeared in photographs taken in the 1920s. The large medallion carpet comes from the ancient village in western Turkey where it was most likely made in the middle of the nineteenth century. Oushak carpets, in particular, have a long-standing connection to European painting, as artists working throughout the Renaissance often included them in interior scenes (the Frick’s portrait of Thomas Cromwell by Hans Holbein shows a sixteenth-century Oushak carpet used as a table covering). Installed in the East Gallery this spring, the rug beautifully sets off the other four paintings currently on view in the room, the four full-length portraits by American expatriate artist James McNeill Whistler, who had an abiding love for the decorative arts of the East.

Comments Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator **Colin B. Bailey**, “This summer, we seized upon the opportunity to place these remarkable masterpieces by Fragonard on view in a way they’ve never before been seen at the Frick. The result is stunning, in fact, even beyond our own level of anticipation, and we hope the public will also take this unprecedented opportunity to enjoy these paintings in their temporary setting between now and the end of September. Without exaggerating, they are Fragonard’s masterpieces, and indeed count among the greatest paintings produced in eighteenth-century Europe. The impact on the visitor entering the East Gallery is truly inspiring.” The relighting and refurbishment project was made



possible through the generosity of the members of the Director's Circle and an anonymous donor.

ABOUT THE FRAGONARD PANELS

The Fragonard Room of The Frick Collection is named for Fragonard's Progress of Love (four panels painted between 1771 and 1773, the remaining ten between 1790 and 1791), considered by many to be the artist's masterpiece and one of the greatest decorative ensembles of the eighteenth century. For his mistress the comtesse du Barry, Louis XV commissioned the architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux to design an entertainment pavilion on the estate of a chateau that the king had recently bought for her in the village of Louveciennes, just outside of Versailles. Fragonard (1732–1806) was commissioned to complete four large canvases—which have since come to be recognized as *The Pursuit*, *The Meeting*, *The Lover Crowned*, and *Love Letters*—for Madame du Barry's dining room. The series was installed at Louveciennes by 1772, but by 1774 the inventory of paintings at the château recorded the series as having been returned to Fragonard and supplanted by works from another artist, Joseph Marie Vien (1716–1809), probably because of a change in the tastes of the period. Fragonard retained the paintings in his studio until 1790, when he spent a year living with a cousin at Grasse, where they were then installed. In Grasse, Fragonard painted ten additional panels (the two large-scale works *Love Triumphant* and *Reverie*; four *Hollyhocks*; and four overdoors of putti) to complete The Progress of Love ensemble. The four original panels are on view in the East Gallery along with *Love Triumphant* and *Reverie*.



Through the dealer Joseph Duveen, in February 1915 Henry Clay Frick acquired The Progress of Love from the sale of the banker and art collector J. P. Morgan's extraordinary collection of furniture, bronzes, enamels, and paintings. Duveen Brothers made no profit on the transaction and agreed to install these large wall paintings and overdoors in what was to be the Frick's Drawing Room, all costs of fabrication and lighting to be borne by the dealer. Duveen contracted the Parisian designers A. Decour et Cie—who had recently installed Jean-Baptiste Huet's suite of large pastoral paintings in comte Moïse de Camondo's mansion (the present Musée Nissim de Camondo)—to prepare a maquette of the new Fragonard Room at 1 East 70th Street. Fabrication of the room's paneling began in June 1915, and by May 1916 the Drawing Room had been transformed into the present-day Fragonard Room, one of the most beloved galleries at the institution.

In mid-October, when visitors next encounter the Fragonard Room, the installation of paintings, furniture, and other objects of decorative art will be seen as never before, given the subtle but significant changes made to their presentation. A dramatically improved and updated custom lighting system will illuminate properly for the first time each of the large-scale paintings. The system will also allow for lighting to be directed advantageously at individual decorative art objects, such as the rare Sevres porcelain pot pourris displayed in the center of the room and the recently purchased Lepaute clock that features a terracotta sculpture by Clodion. Finally, the new system will adjust to external lighting fluctuations at different times of day, which was not possible with the previous arrangement that relied on one master switch and decades-old technology. As part of a larger project occurring simultaneously throughout the galleries, the windows in the Fragonard Room will be restored and refitted this summer as well.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: (212) 288-0700

Website: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

Hours: open six days a week: 10am to 6pm on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11am to 5pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11am to 5pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Admission: \$15; senior citizens \$10; students \$5; "pay as you wish" on Sundays from 11am to 1pm

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.

Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour of the permanent collection, provided by Acoustiguide. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Visits: Please call (212) 288-0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing, or Geetha Natarajan, Media Relations & Marketing Coordinator

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