



PRESS RELEASE

from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION AWARDS THE FRICK COLLECTION A \$1 MILLION CHALLENGE GRANT TO SUPPORT AN ENDOWED CONSERVATION POST



Joseph Godla, Chief Conservator of The Frick Collection;
photo: Michael Bodycomb

The Frick Collection is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a \$1 million challenge grant by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. When matched over the next four years with \$3 million in contributions from other sources, the grant will create a \$4 million endowment for the position of Chief Conservator, also providing, in perpetuity, funds for research, professional development, and related expenses. Comments Frick Collection Board Chairman Margot Bogert, “Change happens in perhaps less obvious ways at the Frick than elsewhere, which for many of our enthusiasts is an attraction. However, in the last decade, the institution has experienced an exciting level of growth and advancement in its curatorial and conservation departments. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has been involved in these efforts in significant ways,

generously funding a vital curatorial fellowship program and contributing support for the endowed position of Curator of Decorative Arts. With this latest grant, we have the opportunity to create a firm foundation for permanence and growth in the vital area of conservation.”

Adds Director Anne L. Poulet, “The establishment of a formal Conservation Department at The Frick Collection is a relatively recent event. We are extremely proud of the superb team now in place, led by

Joseph Godla, and the myriad ways in which he and his staff care for our holdings and the beautiful mansion that houses them. We depend daily on the remarkable skills and watchful eye of this department, whose efforts extend collaboratively into research and education. In helping us meet the challenge grant, our supporters will ensure that this area of the Collection's stewardship continues, while also making possible the staff's broader contributions within the conservation community. It is an exciting prospect, and we are deeply grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for making it possible."

THE HISTORY OF CONSERVATION AT THE FRICK COLLECTION

For many decades following its opening in 1935, the Frick managed its conservation challenges by engaging the contractual services of conservators, beginning with William Suhr, who maintained a studio in the museum and was responsible for the paintings collection. Since Suhr's retirement in 1977, the Frick has contracted The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Paintings Conservation Department to care for its paintings collection, an arrangement that continues today. Between 1965 and 2000, treatments of decorative arts objects and sculpture were conducted by Sveteslao (Nicky) Hlopoff, and the Frick also has had a long-standing, though less formal, association with the Metropolitan's Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation. Richard Stone, recently retired Senior Museum Conservator, undertook technical studies of the sculpture in the collection and continues to be active in technical studies of the Frick's bronzes. During the past six years, Jack Soultanian, a Metropolitan conservator working as a private consultant, has treated several sculptures including two works by Houdon, both presented recently as gifts to the Collection. While Mr. Soultanian continues as a senior consultant to treat terracotta and marble sculptures with complex surface issues, most routine sculpture treatments are now handled in-house.

In 2000, recognizing the importance of conservation at the Frick, the museum hired its first full-time staff conservator. Because decorative arts and sculpture represent more than fifty percent of the permanent collection, Barbara Roberts, a furniture conservator with experience at the Victoria & Albert Museum and the J. Paul Getty Museum, was named to the position. With the hiring of Roberts, the Frick began a more comprehensive effort to address overall conservation issues such as general collections care, environmental conditions, gallery maintenance, and historic preservation of the building.

In 2005, Roberts was succeeded by Joseph Godla, a specialist in European decorative arts with extensive experience working with collections housed in historic buildings. Previously Godla served as Senior Conservator of Historic New England, where he oversaw the care of the 110,000 objects dating from 1650 to the present that are on view in the organization's 35 historic house museums and

its study collection. For the prior ten years, Godla was Conservator of European Decorative Arts and Sculpture at The J. Paul Getty Museum, where he conducted in-depth technical analyses of the furniture collection. He also played a leading role in researching, treating, and installing eighteenth-century French period rooms in the new Getty Center. Godla is an accomplished furniture-maker with expertise in works from the eighteenth century—a period of particular importance at the Frick—and has a strong technical ability along with an intimate knowledge of scientific and scholarly trends in conservation.

CONSERVATION AT THE FRICK COLLECTION TODAY

Over the past four years, Godla has continued to formalize and expand the process begun in 2000 by establishing conservation priorities, addressing overall environmental conditions, undertaking architectural preservation projects, and developing the museum's first long-range conservation plan. The Conservation Department expanded further in 2006 when



The East Gallery, The Frick Collection, New York, Photo: Michael Bodycomb

Senior Gallery Technician Adrian Anderson, responsible for gallery maintenance and exhibitions, began reporting to the Conservator, and again last year with the hiring of the Frick's first Assistant Conservator, Julia Day, an objects specialist. Today the Conservation Department comprises a staff of four full-time employees.

For maintenance as well as research purposes, the department continues to manage treatments of individual decorative art objects and sculpture. Godla has been studying the Frick's Renaissance furniture collection with Associate Curator of Decorative Arts Charlotte Vignon. He has also completed a detailed, year-long conservation study of the museum's significant holdings of carved and gilded picture frames. This aspect of the collection had never before received such attention, and it is hoped that the survey, supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, will provide information on the history of the presentation of paintings within the collection as well as on the frames themselves. With Day, the department has created a plan for developing improved storage and treatment of the Frick's Renaissance enamels (one of the most important Limoges collections in the country), in order to maintain these remarkable and fragile works. The Frick is also preparing to host an enamels-focused meeting in 2010 that will bring together conservators, conservation scientists, and curators. In the summer of 2009, Day

completed a lengthy treatment of the Frick's celebrated *Barbet Angel*, which was recently returned to view in the Garden Court.



The Fragonard Room, The Frick Collection, New York, Photo: Michael Bodycomb

Perhaps most noticeable to the public has been the series of gallery relighting and renovation projects coordinated by Godla, in collaboration with the curatorial and operations departments, including the Oval Room, Cabinet, and special exhibition galleries. In the summer of 2007, the Fragonard Room was completely refurbished, and in 2008 attention turned to the Living Hall. In 2009, the East Gallery (illustrated on page 3) was substantially renovated and given the first new lighting scheme since the museum's opening in 1935, providing an opportunity to carry out a series of art moves and rearrangements in the galleries that had not occurred since 1945. Upcoming and under his direction are the renovation and relighting of the Boucher Room.

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: \$18; senior citizens \$12; 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.

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 Audio Tour of the permanent collection. 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, Head of Media Relations & Marketing, or Alexis Light, Media Relations & Marketing Coordinator

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