

PRESS RELEASE

from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION APPROVES ENCLOSURE OF FRICK PORTICO TO CREATE GALLERY FOR SCULPTURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS

Visitors at The Frick Collection find it difficult to believe that the Garden Court—a signature gallery considered by many to be the heart of the former mansion—was never enjoyed by its original resident, industrialist Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919). Indeed, it was created by enclosing a former carriage-way roughly fifteen years after his death, when in the 1930s architect John Russell Pope undertook the conversion of the Frick family home into a public museum, nearly doubling its size. The presentation of works of art within the mansion never remained static either, as



Model of the Portico for Decorative Arts and Sculpture, south façade, by Davis Brody Bond Aedas Architects and Planners

Frick was an extremely active collector through his final days. His taste broadened from paintings to include sculpture and decorative arts, and only a year after moving into the residence, he began discussions with his original architect, Thomas Hastings of Carrère and Hastings, asking him to draw up plans for an extension that included a gallery devoted to the display of sculpture. **The Frick Collection now returns to that idea. On June 22, 2010, at a meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, a plan was approved, as submitted, to enclose an underutilized portion of the property, the portico in the Fifth Avenue Garden, which is viewable from inside the house but not open to the general public. The highly transparent enclosure of the portico, set back from the original limestone columns and cornice, will create a new gallery within the existing footprint of the institution. Construction is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2010, with an expected completion date of September 2011.**

Comments Margot Bogert, Chair of the Board of Trustees, “The Frick is often thought of in terms of its paintings collection, which was assembled with great care and in concert with the development of the mansion in which it is displayed. However, we know that in Henry Clay Frick’s final years, he turned an equally keen eye to the acquisition of the decorative arts. Porcelain from the Royal Manufactory at Sèvres as well as fine examples of eighteenth-century furniture by Jean-Henri Riesener, Martin Carlin, and other notable cabinetmakers, entered his collection and are on display today. He was also drawn to sculpture, a direction continued thereafter by his daughter Helen Clay Frick. We have carried this forward, acquiring in that area, while formally establishing and expanding our Objects Conservation Department and appointing Charlotte Vignon as the museum’s first curator of decorative arts. With the creation of this new gallery, we will be able to present together significant examples of sculpture that are currently scattered throughout the institution in hallways and in galleries dominated by paintings. We hope to afford these objects the kind of sensitive display that Henry Clay Frick once dreamed they might have, and look forward to their closer study and appreciation, as a result.”

Adds Director Anne L. Poulet, “The gallery will also accommodate cases for the display of porcelain, a medium extremely well suited to this room’s natural light and its south-western orientation. A private foundation will fund the project to enclose and construct the portico gallery, and the Frick is actively raising endowment funds to support the costs of maintaining this additional gallery space. Through the adaptive reuse of this original but rarely-accessed space, the Frick will fulfill a wish first expressed by its founder more than ninety-four years ago to improve upon the display and public appreciation of sculpture and the decorative arts.”

DAVIS BRODY BOND TO CREATE AN ENCLOSURE IN HARMONY WITH THE VISION OF HENRY CLAY FRICK

New York-based **Davis Brody Bond Aedas Architects and Planners** (DBBA) have been appointed to undertake the enclosure of the portico. DBBA is one of the leading architectural practices in the United States engaged in a range of museum and landmark structure commissions. Current cultural projects include the National September 11 Museum at the World Trade Center, New York; the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.; and Baruch College’s Field Building Restoration at the City University of New York. DBBA has completed work locally for the New York Public Library (also a Carrère and Hastings building); Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York (The Juilliard School renovation and the Samuel B. and David Rose Building); Walter Reade Theater / Film Society of Lincoln Center; Studio Museum of Harlem; Brooklyn Botanic Garden (Palm House restoration and Steinhardt Conservatory), among many other organizations. DBBA’s approach to the Frick project remains true to the Beaux Arts building constructed in 1913–14 by Carrère and Hastings. Following a directive to incorporate the structure’s existing features, the colonnade and exterior limestone wall will remain the gallery’s main surfaces, and through an unobtrusive use of glazing on the south side, the sense of the outdoors will

remain intact. The existing stone materials will be retained, and the architectural details will draw upon the vocabulary of the original mansion and Pope's enclosed Garden Court of 1935.

LIGHTING AND DISPLAY PARTNERS CHOSEN

Richard Renfro of **Renfro Design Group** will devise the lighting system. The firm was selected for its experience on civic, cultural, and historic renovation projects, such as the Grand Central Terminal restoration, the American Wing at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the architectural and exhibit lighting for the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Bloch Building in Kansas City. In 2006, Renfro Design Group undertook the award-winning relighting of the Frick's Fragonard Room, and the firm is presently installing new illumination in the nearby Boucher Room, to be completed in the summer of 2010. Thus, familiar with features of the Frick building and character within which its masterpieces are displayed, the firm's scheme incorporates a series of lanterns based on those in Pope's Garden Court and set into existing outlets in the portico's ceiling. As is the case elsewhere in the galleries, further illumination will rely on ambient and supplemental spot lighting to accent the display cases and sculpture. Longtime Frick exhibition designer **Stephen Saitas**, also known for his work at The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Huntington Library, Art Collection, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA; the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT; and the New York Public Library, is engaged on the project as well.

A MANSION ALTERED TO ACCOMMODATE FRICK'S BROADENING TASTE IN FINE AND DECORATIVE ARTS



Thomas Hastings's 1916 drawing of a proposed sculpture gallery, The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives

Although initially designed with a great paintings collection in mind, the house of Henry Clay Frick would soon be filled with sculpture and decorative arts objects of comparable price and importance. In 1916, the mansion's Drawing Room was transformed into the fully furnished Fragonard Room featuring the artist's Progress of Love series, and Mrs. Frick's upstairs boudoir was subsequently redecorated and fitted with eighteenth-century painted panels, furniture, and porcelains (shown together today in the first floor Boucher Room). Within less than a year of those alterations, Mr. Frick's office was remodeled to display enamels purchased from the estate of J. P. Morgan. While Frick's attraction to Old Master paintings had not waned—fine works by Titian, Hals, Vermeer, and Gainsborough also entered his collection during this period—his taste had broadened to include sculpture as well as a range of decorative arts. His property had expanded as well; in 1915 Frick purchased the adjoining property, a fifty-foot plot at 6-8 East 71st Street, and authorized his architect, Thomas Hastings, to draw

up plans for an addition. The resulting drawings show an extension of the façade on that street and include a three-bay wing with imposing columns and an ornamented entablature to house a gallery devoted to the display of sculpture. The sculpture gallery sketch also shows a vaulted ceiling, akin to the one in Hastings’s garden portico. In general terms the works shown on pedestals were inspired by three magnificent bronzes acquired by Frick in this period. Within a few months (and perhaps not coincidentally, at around the time the United States became engaged in World War I) Frick’s eagerness to progress with the plan cooled, and he informed Hastings that “in view of the scarcity of labor and rising costs of construction,” he decided to forestall the project “until times become normal and perhaps reasonable.” In any event, he continued to acquire sculpture, such as the French eighteenth-century marble portrait bust of the Comtesse du Cayla by Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828).

During this period Frick also drew up his will, which provides for The Frick Collection. Written as a statement of purpose rather than a restrictive set of rules, the Frick’s charter permitted the Board of Trustees to augment his collection. That body included daughter Helen Clay Frick, whose life’s purpose was shaped by her interest in art and who played a strong role in making future museum acquisitions. Helen selectively followed her father’s lead, matching the quality and grandeur of his best purchases across all media. She became deeply engaged by the work of eighteenth-century French artists, training herself to become a respected Houdon specialist. In 1935, she proposed for acquisition the artist’s magnificent life-sized portrait bust of Armand-Thomas Hue, fourth Marquis de Miromesnil, which was displayed in the Garden Court on the occasion of the museum’s opening. In 1939, she instigated the purchase of Houdon’s life-sized terracotta *Diana the Huntress*, now perhaps the sculpture best identified with The Frick Collection’s holdings, and destined for the new portico gallery.



Jean-Antoine Houdon, *Diana the Huntress*, 1776-1795, terracotta, 75 1/2 inches, The Frick Collection, New York

Upon the Frick’s opening in 1935, many of the works of art were crowded in the long West Gallery, where paintings were double-hung and where Frick’s bronze busts filled the corners of the room. Within a couple of years, the number of pictures in the West Gallery was reduced and several sculptures were moved into the Garden Court. Over the years, the collection of paintings, decorative arts, and sculpture has grown. The museum’s holdings in the latter category now include additional examples by Houdon, as well as masterpieces by Antoine Coysevox (1640–1720), Augustin Pajou (1730–1809), Louis-Simon Boizot (1743–1809), and Joseph Chinard (1756–1813). Several objects have moved to new locations within the mansion, some for the purposes of better display, while others have shifted in deference to new installations. Sculptures can now be found throughout the institution, some located in internal hallways where they cannot be seen to their best advantage. Furthermore, as

the Oval Room took on the frequent function of serving as a special exhibitions space, Houdon's *Diana the Huntress* was moved from this space to the East Gallery and later placed off view. With the creation of the new Portico for Decorative Arts and Sculpture, the Frick's curators have the opportunity to display porcelain and sculpture in bronze, marble, and terracotta for the first time in a truly purpose-built and illuminated space. When the new gallery opens, it will become a permanent home to Houdon's *Diana the Huntress*, which is presently undergoing technical studies in preparation for its first cleaning since its acquisition more than seventy years ago. Returning to view after a five-year absence, Houdon's masterpiece will be situated in the western-most bay of the new portico.

A COLLECTION OF COLLECTIONS

As a vigorous collector, Henry Clay Frick was able to incorporate into his holdings a number of masterpieces once owned by other notable collectors. In that sense, the institution he founded is a reflection of the taste of more than one man, but always filtered carefully through the same lens of quality. J. P. Morgan's death in 1913 afforded Henry Clay Frick the opportunity to purchase the large paintings and furniture that now occupy the museum's Fragonard Room as well as the finest examples of his collection of Limoges enamels, Chinese porcelains, and Renaissance bronzes. In 1977, the institution constructed a Reception Hall that houses a significant gift of blue and white Chinese export porcelain given by Frick's son, Childs. At the same time, the Frick created its elevated 70th Street Garden, designed by Russell Page, and the downstairs special exhibition galleries. In 1999, the Frick was bequeathed a group of clocks and watches from the estate of Winthrop Edey, along with an endowment to support their care, study, and display. This significant gift was the subject of an exhibition and publication in 2001, and many of these fine and rare timepieces have been since integrated into the permanent collection galleries.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: (212) 288-0700

Web site: 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.

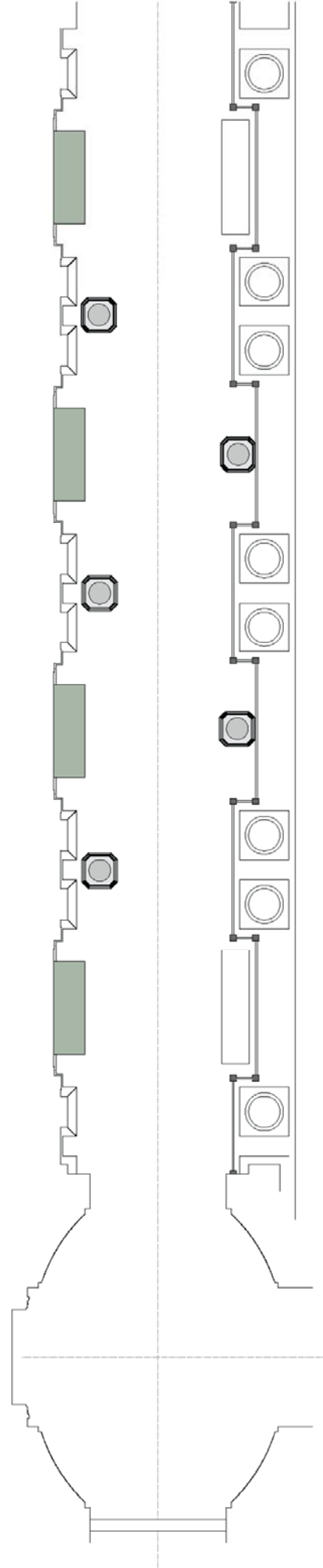
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PROPOSED EXHIBIT

THE FRICK COLLECTION • PORTICO FOR DECORATIVE ARTS AND SCULPTURE
DAVIS BRODY BOND AEDAS ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS • MAY 2010