

The Frick Collection Policy on the Admission of Children

It is the current policy of The Frick Collection that children under ten years of age are not admitted. This policy dates back to the founding of the Collection which opened to the public in 1935. It is a policy established by the Trustees and is deemed necessary to fulfill the intention of the Collection's founder, Henry Clay Frick, to preserve and display his celebrated works of art in their domestic setting.

The Frick Collection stands almost alone among the major museums of this country in that its most valuable and delicate works of art are displayed with a minimum of ropes, barriers, platforms, cases, and stanchions that typify museum installations throughout the world. Unfortunately, many other museums have learned that irreparable harm can be done to an artwork in the briefest instant, intentionally or not, by a careless hand. Even a fingerprint can cause permanent damage to some antique materials.

Most institutions solve this by displaying those parts of their collections which are similar to the Frick in so-called "period rooms," where the visitor may look from a barricaded doorway into interiors from an earlier time. The rooms of The Frick Collection, which one may walk through at leisure, contain works of art that are more rare, fine, and valuable than those of nearly any "period room" to be found in another museum. As you can imagine, leaving the works of art exposed as they are at The Frick Collection, and as they would be found in a house, places them at significantly greater risk.

The admission of young children to The Frick Collection would necessitate erecting numerous and varied physical barriers to protect the works of art. That action would change fundamentally the experience of viewing the Collection. Not only would children thereby fail to experience these works of art in their historic setting of 1914-the basic premise of The Frick Collection-but this experience would be lost to all adults as well.

In 1995, pursuant to a change in the Administrative Code of the City of New York, The Frick Collection applied to and received from the New York City Commission on Human Rights an exemption from the age discrimination provisions of Section 8-107(4)(a). In providing this exemption, the City recognized the unique circumstances of The Frick Collection and agreed that its regulations were necessary to ensure that the safety and unencumbered display of these works of art was preserved. Hence, the Collection is legally entitled to its position.

We sincerely regret any inconvenience which this policy may cause our patrons, but we hope that this explanation will enable you to understand why we firmly believe that this regulation is not only sensible, but is the only responsible stance we can take.

Revised: July 2009