

## *Gainsborough: The Fashion of Portraiture*

Frick to Present New York's First Exhibition on the English Artist's Portraiture

February 12 through May 11, 2026



**New York (November 3, 2025)** — Beginning February 12, 2026, The Frick Collection will present its first special exhibition dedicated to the English artist Thomas Gainsborough, and the first devoted to his portraiture ever held in New York. Displaying more than two dozen paintings, the show will explore the richly interwoven relationship between Gainsborough's portraits and fashion in the eighteenth century. The works included represent some of the greatest achievements from every stage of this period-defining artist's career, drawn from the Frick's holdings and from collections across North America and the United Kingdom.

The trappings and trade of fashion filled the artist's world—in magazines and tailor shops, at the opera and on promenades—and his portraits were at the heart of it all. This exhibition invites visitors to consider not only the actual clothing the painter depicted, but also the role of his canvases as both records of and players in the larger conception of fashion: encompassing everything from class, wealth, labor, and craft to formality, intimacy, and time. Recent technical investigations also shed light on Gainsborough's artistic process, including connections to materials that fueled the fashion industry.

*Gainsborough: The Fashion of Portraiture* is organized by Aimee Ng, the museum's Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator. Stated Ng, "The spectacular and at times, to modern eyes, absurd fashions in portraits by Thomas Gainsborough and his contemporaries continue to



fascinate viewers today. The appeal of these demonstrations of taste, status, and wealth persists in tension with increased recognition, over the last few decades, of the injustices that often made such extravagance possible. This exhibition necessarily deals with clothing and personal attire, while exploring how fashion was understood in Gainsborough's time, how it touched every level of society, and how portraiture itself was as much a construction and invention as a sitter's style."

## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

The exhibition will be complemented by a richly illustrated catalogue authored by Ng, with an additional essay by Kari Rayner, Associate Conservator of Paintings at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

Along with entries for each work in the show, the catalogue features essays on portraiture and self-fashioning in Gainsborough's era, on materials and techniques that linked clothing and paintings, and on the roles of class and time in eighteenth-century style. The volume considers how and why Gainsborough and his sitters—from dukes and duchesses to the artist's family members to the once-enslaved writer and composer Ignatius Sancho—shaped how they would be immortalized in paint. The book also touches on the longstanding appeal of Gainsborough's art, particularly its renewed popularity a century after the painter's death among American collectors such as the Fricks, Vanderbilts, and Huntingtons.

The 200-page hardcover volume is published by Rizzoli Electa in association with The Frick Collection (\$50; Frick members: \$40 in-store, \$45 online). The book will be available for purchase in the Frick's Museum and Exhibition Shops, online at [shop.frick.org](https://shop.frick.org), or by contacting [shop@frick.org](mailto:shop@frick.org) or 212.547.6849.

The exhibition catalogue is funded by Dr. Tai-Heng Cheng.

## EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Major support for *Gainsborough: The Fashion of Portraiture* is provided by an anonymous donor in honor of Ian Wardropper.

Additional funding is provided by Barbara and Bradford Evans, Kathleen Feldstein, Michael and Jane Horvitz, Dr. Arlene P. McKay, The Helen Clay Frick Foundation, James K. Kloppenburg, David and Kate Bradford, Katie von Strasser – InspiratumColligere, the Dr. Lee McCormick Edwards Charitable Foundation, Edward Lee Cave, Mr. and Mrs. Hubert L. Goldschmidt, Jennifer Schnabl, the Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation, Bradley Isham Collins and Amy Fine Collins, Siri and Bob Marshall, Bailey Foote, Alexander Mason Hankin, Brittany Beyer Harwin and Zachary Harwin, and Otto Naumann and Heidi D. Shafranek.

## ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION

Housed in one of New York City's last great Gilded Age homes, The Frick Collection provides intimate encounters with one of the world's foremost collections of fine and decorative arts. Open since 1935, the institution originated with Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919), who bequeathed his Fifth Avenue residence and collection of European paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts for the enjoyment of the public. The museum's holdings, which encompass masterworks from the Renaissance through the late nineteenth century, have grown over the decades, more than doubling in number since the opening of the museum. The Frick Art Research Library, founded more than one hundred years ago by Henry Clay Frick's daughter Helen Clay Frick, is today a leading art history research center that serves students, scholars, and the public.

This spring, the Frick completed a major renovation and enhancement project and reopened on April 17 with great fanfare. Designed by Selldorf Architects, with executive architect Beyer Blinder Belle, the project was developed to honor the historic legacy and character of the Frick while addressing critical infrastructural and operational needs.

For more information, please visit [frick.org](http://frick.org).

## IMAGES

Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), *Mary, Countess Howe*, 1763–64, oil on canvas, 94 15/16 × 60 3/4 in. (243.2 × 154.3 cm), English Heritage, Kenwood House, London © Historic England / Bridgeman Images; Gainsborough, *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*, ca. 1750, oil on canvas, 27 1/2 × 47 in. (69.8 × 119.4 cm) © The National Gallery, London; Gainsborough, *Gainsborough Dupont*, ca. 1770–72, oil on canvas, 17 15/16 × 14 3/4 in. (45.5 × 37.5 cm), Tate, London; Gainsborough, *The Hon. Frances Duncombe*, ca. 1776, oil on canvas, 92 1/4 × 61 1/8 in. (234.3 × 155.3 cm), The Frick Collection, New York, photo: Joseph Coscia Jr.; Gainsborough, *Mrs. Fitzherbert*, ca. 1784, oil on canvas, 29 7/8 × 25 in. (75.9 × 63.5 cm), Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, photo courtesy the Legion of Honor

## INTERACT

Facebook, X, Instagram, Threads  
@FrickCollection  
TikTok  
@TheFrickCollection

## BASIC INFORMATION

**Website:** [frick.org](https://frick.org)

**Email:** [info@frick.org](mailto:info@frick.org)

**Bloomberg Connects mobile guide:**  
[frick.org/connects](https://frick.org/connects)

**Programs:** [frick.org/programs](https://frick.org/programs)

**Explore:** [frick.org/explore](https://frick.org/explore)

**Address:** 1 East 70th Street, New York, NY 10021

**Museum hours:** Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Closed Tuesday and holidays. Pay-what-you-wish admission offered Wednesday, 1:30 to 5:30 p.m.

See website for holiday schedule.

**Admission:** Advance timed tickets are required (except for members). \$30 adults, \$22 seniors (65+) and visitors with disabilities, \$17 students with ID. Admission is always free for members and youth ages 10–18.

**Please note:** Only children ages ten and older are admitted to the museum.

**Tickets:** [frick.org/tickets](https://frick.org/tickets)

**For questions:** [admissions@frick.org](mailto:admissions@frick.org)

**Group reservations:** [frick.org/groups](https://frick.org/groups)

**Shop:** Open during museum hours and online daily at [shop.frick.org](https://shop.frick.org).

**Café:** Westmoreland is open during museum hours. Ticket holders and members can make same-day reservations onsite. Learn more at [frick.org/café](https://frick.org/café).

**Subway:** #6 local to 68th Street station; #Q to 72nd Street station

**Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

**Frick Art Research Library:** Open Monday through Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. No appointment necessary; registration required. For more information, visit [frick.org/library](https://frick.org/library).

## #424

For further press information, contact us at [communications@frick.org](mailto:communications@frick.org).