

The temporary home of The Frick Collection

## Final Installation at Frick Madison Reunites Two Masterpieces by Giorgione and Giovanni Bellini After Centuries Apart

November 9, 2023, through February 4, 2024



New York (October 2, 2023)—This fall and winter, visitors to Frick Madison, the temporary home of The Frick Collection, will have an unprecedented opportunity to view two Renaissance masterpieces reunited for the first time in more than four hundred years.

Giorgione's *Three Philosophers*, on rare loan from Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum, will be shown in dialogue with the Frick's beloved *St. Francis in the Desert* by Giovanni Bellini. The works were owned by the same Venetian collector, Taddeo Contarini (ca. 1466–1540), and were displayed for many decades in his palazzo before their separation centuries ago.

Comments Ian Wardropper, Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Director of the Frick, “It would be difficult to think of a more fitting conclusion for our temporary residency at Frick Madison than this once-in-a-lifetime installation. These two complex Renaissance paintings have prompted an enormous amount of commentary over the years, and we are delighted to present the pair together as an exciting farewell to this fascinating chapter in our institution’s history.”

*Bellini and Giorgione in the House of Taddeo Contarini* will examine the joint history of the two paintings. It has been proposed by scholars that Giorgione conceived *The Three Philosophers*, most likely commissioned by Contarini himself, as a companion to Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert*, and they seem to have been at Contarini's palazzo for most of the sixteenth century before being separated. At Frick Madison, the pair will be displayed—alone—in the iconic room within the Marcel Breuer–designed building where *St. Francis* has hung in isolated splendor, as if in a secular chapel.



This special presentation is organized by Xavier F. Salomon, Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator, who is authoring an accompanying book about the paintings and their original owner and his collection. Salomon states, “To this day, Taddeo Contarini is best known for his ownership of two masterpieces of Venetian Renaissance painting. Despite the attention that has been lavished on the paintings from his collection, Contarini remains an elusive figure, one we can understand only through some glimmers of information about him. The reunion of these two paintings brings an important part of Contarini’s collection back to life.”

## COLLECTION OF TADDEO CONTARINI

In 1525, the scholar Marcantonio Michiel recorded works he had seen in a number of private collections in Venice and the Veneto, including that of Taddeo Contarini, a Venetian noble, in his palazzo in the parish of Santa Fosca. Among the ten paintings Michiel recorded from Contarini's holdings—most of them now lost—he described two in detail. Regarding Giorgione's scene, he wrote of "a painting in oil of three philosophers in a landscape, two standing, and one seated who contemplates the rays of the sun, with an admirably rendered rock." His final entry reads: "The panel of St. Francis in the desert, in oil, was the work of Giovanni Bellini, and it has a landscape nearby, wonderfully composed and detailed."

The paintings—known ever since as *The Three Philosophers* and *St. Francis in the Desert*—were still at Contarini's palazzo by 1556, according to an inventory of his collection. They remained there for at least thirty-one years and possibly longer, before being separated by 1589, when the Bellini moved to Palazzo Giustinian through the marriage of Taddeo's great-granddaughter Elisabetta. They continued to change hands through the centuries, eventually reaching the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Frick, where they are among those collections' most important paintings.

## FREE COMMUNITY EVENING THIS WINTER

Frick Madison's final free community evening, Gray-Krehbiel Open Night, will feature programming inspired by *Bellini and Giorgione in the House of Taddeo Contarini*. Held on Friday, February 2, from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m., the event will welcome visitors after hours to explore the galleries and the reading room of the Frick Art Reference Library. A variety of talks will be presented throughout the evening, including on the shared history of the Bellini and Giorgione works.

The event is free, with advance registration recommended. ASL interpretation and Assistive Listening Devices are provided at all the talks. Full details will be available at [frick.org/opennights](https://frick.org/opennights).

## ACCOMPANYING PUBLICATION



Accompanying *Bellini and Giorgione in the House of Taddeo Contarini* will be a book of the same name, authored by Xavier F. Salomon and published by The Frick Collection in association with D Giles Ltd., London. Alongside beautiful illustrations, Salomon presents new research exploring the origins of the paintings and re-evaluates their places in the collection of Taddeo Contarini.

The hardcover publication of 120 pages (\$34.95, member price \$27.96) features 35 color illustrations. The book may be pre-ordered online through the Frick's Museum Shop at [shop.frick.org](https://shop.frick.org), by emailing [sales@frick.org](mailto:sales@frick.org), or by calling 212.547.6849. It will also be available for purchase onsite this fall.

## INSTALLATION SUPPORT

*Bellini and Giorgione in the House of Taddeo Contarini* is generously funded by David and Julie Tobey, Ambassador and Mrs. W. L. Lyons Brown, Kathleen Feldstein, Michael and Jane Horvitz, the Robert Lehman Foundation, the Estate of Seymour R. Askin Jr., the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, Gini and Randall Barbato, Jerald D. Fessenden, Mary and Howard S. Frank, Fernand Lamesch and Mary Pisacane, the Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation, Gabelli Funds, Hubert and Mireille

Goldschmidt, Casey Kohlberg, Patricia Dugan Perlmuth, Michael L. Santini, Constantine P. Sidamon-Eristoff, the Consulate General of Italy in New York, Mercy Cohen, and an anonymous donor.

## ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION AND FRICK MADISON

The historic buildings of The Frick Collection are currently closed for renovation and enhancement, their first comprehensive upgrade since the 1930s. For the duration of the renovation project, the collections of the museum and library remain accessible to the public at Frick Madison, the Marcel Breuer–designed building at 945 Madison Avenue that was once the home of the Whitney Museum of American Art and, most recently, The Met Breuer. Now in its final months, the temporary residency ensures that the public can continue to enjoy the Frick’s masterpieces, while also giving the museum a unique opportunity to reimagine its presentation of paintings, sculptures, and decorative arts within a completely different context. Frick Madison remains open through March 3, 2024.

Honoring the institution’s architectural legacy and unique character, the renovation plan designed by Selldorf Architects will provide unprecedented access to the original 1914 residence of Henry Clay Frick, while preserving the intimate visitor experience and beloved galleries for which the Frick is known. Conceived to address pressing institutional and programmatic needs, the plan will create new spaces for permanent collection display and special exhibitions, conservation, education, and public programs, while improving visitor amenities and overall accessibility. The Frick Collection reopens on East 70th Street in late 2024.

Images: Giorgio da Castelfranco, known as Giorgione (ca. 1477–1510), *The Three Philosophers*, ca. 1508–9, oil on canvas, 49 7/16 x 57 9/16 in. (125.5 x 146.2 cm), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photo: KHM-Museumsverband; Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1424/35–1516), *St. Francis in the Desert*, ca. 1475–80, oil on panel, 49 1/16 x 55 7/8 in. (124.6 x 142 cm), The Frick Collection, New York. Photo: Michael Bodycomb; Cover of *Bellini and Giorgione in the House of Taddeo Contarini*

## INTERACT

   @FrickCollection

#FrickMadison

## BASIC INFORMATION

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

**Building project:** [frickfuture.org](https://frickfuture.org)

**Bloomberg Connects app:** [frick.org/app](https://frick.org/app)

**Frick Madison visitor address:** 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York, NY 10021

**Museum hours:** Thursday through Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; closed Monday through Wednesday. See website for holiday schedule.

**Admission:** Timed tickets are strongly recommended and may be purchased online. \$22 general public; \$17 seniors and visitors with disabilities; \$12 students. Free admission is granted to visitors ages 10–17. Admission is always free for members. Pay-what-you-wish admission is offered Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

**Please note:** Children under ten are not admitted to the museum.

**Visitor guidelines:** [frick.org/visit/guidelines](https://frick.org/visit/guidelines)

**Ticket purchase link:** [frick.org/tickets](https://frick.org/tickets). For questions: [admissions@frick.org](mailto:admissions@frick.org)

**Group reservations:** For questions: [grouppreservations@frick.org](mailto:grouppreservations@frick.org)

**Public programs:** A calendar of online and in-person events is available on our website.

**Shop:** Open during museum hours as well as online daily.

**Refreshments:** A light menu, offered by The SisterYard, is available on the lower level during museum hours.

**Subway:** #6 local to 77th Street station; #Q to 72nd Street station. **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 75th Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 74th Street

**Museum mailing address:** 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10021

**Photography:** Allowed only in the Frick Madison Lobby.

**Reading room:** Access is offered by appointment Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For further information, visit [frick.org/tickets](https://frick.org/tickets).

## #398

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