

THE FRICK COLLECTION

Institutional Backgrounder

Open to the public since 1935, The Frick Collection provides intimate encounters with one of the world's foremost collections of fine and decorative arts. In addition to its Gilded Age interiors, historic buildings, and gardens, the institution also includes the Frick Art Research Library, which serves as a vital resource for students, scholars, and the public. More information about the Frick's collection, exhibitions, programs, and history follows below.

PERMANENT COLLECTION

The Frick houses a permanent collection of approximately 1,800 works of fine and decorative art, with nearly one half coming from the founding collection of American industrialist and philanthropist Henry Clay Frick and the remainder from subsequent acquisitions by purchase and donation. Celebrated for its holdings of Old Master paintings as well as works through the late nineteenth century, the collection features famed artists—among them Bellini, Boucher, Fragonard, Gainsborough, Goya, El Greco, Hals, Holbein, Houdon, Rembrandt, Turner, Van Dyck, Vermeer, and Whistler—along with Italian Renaissance and early Northern European sculpture, eighteenth-century European furniture, European and Chinese porcelain, and carpets.

Over the past twenty-five years, the Frick has strengthened its holdings through the acquisition of works from major private collections. These include a gift of clocks and watches assembled by Winthrop Kellogg Edey, which established horological objects as an area of strength; Henry H. Arnhold's gift of his collection of Meissen porcelain, one of the finest in private hands; French faience from the collection of Sidney R. Knafel; a major promised gift of portrait medals from Stephen K. and Janie Woo Scher; and a significant group of Du Paquier porcelain from the Melinda and Paul Sullivan Collection. Most recently, the Frick received the largest and most significant promised gift of drawings and pastels in its history, from the collection of Elizabeth and Jean-Marie Eveillard, which features works by Boucher, Degas, Fragonard, Goya, Lawrence, Millet, and many others.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

Throughout its history, the Frick has distinguished itself with a vibrant and varied program of exhibitions that have brought new scholarship to the fore. The institution's temporary relocation to Frick Madison in 2021–24 enabled the museum to showcase its holdings in a completely new context, complemented by a continuing program of special installations that invite fresh perspectives on the Old Masters. Bringing contemporary artists into dialogue with works from the past, Frick Madison featured such acclaimed presentations as *Barkley L. Hendricks: Portraits at the Frick* (2023–24); *Nicolas Party and Rosalba Carriera* (2023–24); and *Living Histories: Queer Views and Old Masters* (2021–22).

Previous exhibitions at the museum’s permanent East 70th Street location include *Apollo* magazine’s international winner for Exhibition of the Year, *Luigi Valadier: Splendor in Eighteenth-Century Rome* (2018–19); *Zurbarán’s Jacob and His Twelve Sons: Paintings from Auckland Castle* (2018); *Murillo: The Self-Portraits* (2017–18); *Pierre Gouthière: Virtuoso Gilder at the French Court* (2016–17); *Van Dyck: The Anatomy of Portraiture* (2016); *Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Hals: Masterpieces of Dutch Painting from the Mauritshuis* (2013–14); *Picasso’s Drawings, 1890–1921: Reinventing Tradition* (2011–12); *Goya’s Last Works* (2006); *Memling’s Portraits* (2005); and *Whistler, Women, and Fashion* (2003).

In addition to thematic and large-scale exhibitions, a signature endeavor at the Frick is the focused presentation of single paintings and pairings, with examples including *Bellini and Giorgione in the House of Taddeo Contarini* (2023–24), presented at Frick Madison; *The Charterhouse of Bruges: Jan van Eyck, Petrus Christus, and Jan Vos* (2018–19); *Veronese in Murano: Two Venetian Renaissance Masterpieces Restored* (2017–18); *Cagnacci’s “Repentant Magdalene”: An Italian Baroque Masterpiece from the Norton Simon Museum* (2016–17); *Leighton’s Flaming June* (2015); and *The Poetry of Parmigianino’s “Schiava Turca”* (2014).

PUBLIC AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Frick has been recognized nationally for its public and educational programs, which engage thousands of visitors annually through online and in-person initiatives. With the creation of the Frick’s first dedicated education rooms and a new 218-seat auditorium, the Frick is able to better serve its audiences and support its roster of programs—which include school, college/university, and community group visits, lectures and symposia, drawing programs, as well as music and performance.

Key programs have included the acclaimed *Cocktails with a Curator* video series, launched in 2020 as a means to stay connected with the public during the pandemic. The weekly program quickly became a global phenomenon, garnering more than 1.8 million views and earning a nomination for a Webby Award, the “Oscars of the Internet.”

In 2015, the Frick launched The Frick Film Project, a collaboration with the Ghetto Film School, a Bronx-based nonprofit organization. The course culminates each year with the creation of student-produced films inspired by the Frick and its works of art. This rewarding partnership is one of many that continue to engage and forge connections between the institution and local communities. Others include relationships with AHRC New York City, Art History Reference Fellowship, City University of New York (CUNY) Arts, Columbia University: Art Humanities, The Creative Center at University Settlement, Culture Pass, The East Harlem School, Hunter College Office of the Arts, The Institute of Fine Arts of New York University, Job Path NYC, Mannes School of Music at The New School, The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, Sanctuary for Families, and Success Academy. The Frick has also offered a long-standing paid internship program to bolster access to career opportunities in the arts.

FRICK ART RESEARCH LIBRARY

An integral component of the Frick’s scholarly mission, the Frick Art Research Library (renamed in 2024 from the Frick Art Reference Library) is one of the world’s preeminent centers for art historical research. Helen Clay Frick, daughter of the museum’s founder, established the library in the early 1920s as a memorial to her father. Today, more than a quarter of its collection consists of one-of-a-kind items. Its holdings of books, photographs, and other materials cover topics related to fine and decorative arts created in the European tradition from the fourth through the twentieth century, a much wider scope than that of the Frick’s permanent art collection. The library also houses the Frick family papers; a rich collection of auction catalogs; a Photoarchive collection of 1.5 million images of works of art, now all digitized; documentation relating to historic art dealers, gallerists, and scholars; as well as extensive web archives.

FOUNDING AND EVOLUTION

Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919) was an American industrialist and philanthropist who built one of the era’s most extensive private collections of fine and decorative arts. In 1913, Frick engaged the architecture firm Carrère and Hastings to construct an elegant Beaux-Arts house on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. While the mansion initially served as the Frick family’s private residence, he always envisioned it would become a resource dedicated to “encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts, and of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects,” as he wrote in his will, leaving the home and his collection to the public.

After Frick’s death, in 1919, a Board of Trustees was established to fulfill his wish. In 1931, architect John Russell Pope was engaged to expand and adapt the building into a museum. Taking inspiration from the monumental scale of the house’s principal spaces, he created a series of main-floor galleries, program spaces, an entrance hall, and the interior Garden Court. Pope also designed an adjacent building on East 71st Street to house the Frick Art Research Library. The new museum and library building opened in 1935.

To accommodate the institution’s growth, the Frick built a two-story pavilion in 1977 and introduced the 70th Street Garden, with landscape design by Russell Page. Another smaller expansion was completed in 2011, which created the Portico Gallery. The 815-square-foot exhibition space, designed by Davis Brody Bond, offers views of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.’s Fifth Avenue Garden.

The recently completed renovation and enhancement project, designed by Selldorf Architects with Executive Architect Beyer Blinder Belle, responds to the continued growth of The Frick Collection’s audiences, collections, and programmatic offerings, while maintaining the intimate experience for which the institution is known. During the project, the Frick temporarily relocated five blocks north to Frick Madison, in the iconic Marcel Breuer-designed building, which was open to the public from March 2021 through March 3, 2024. The Frick’s revitalized buildings at 1 East 70th Street reopen to the public on April 17, 2025.

For further press information, please contact communications@frick.org.