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from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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ACCESSIBILITY OF THE FRICK COLLECTION GREATLY ENHANCED

**FREE *ARTPHONE* BY *ACOUSTIGUIDE* OFFERS SELF-GUIDED
TOURS IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES**

REORGANIZED ENTRY HALL WELCOMES VISITORS

RE-LIT GALLERIES IMPROVE THE VIEWING EXPERIENCE

LAUNCH OF INNOVATIVE WEBSITE ENGAGES A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

This summer, visitors to The Frick Collection will notice several important changes – not to the reflective atmosphere of the galleries, not to the grand architecture of the Gilded Age mansion, nor to the number and quality of the stunning paintings, sculptures, and decorative artworks on view. However, visitors will find themselves unmistakably and warmly welcomed with new services that allow them to view and experience the Collection and its masterpieces as they never have before. Comments **Samuel Sachs II**, Director since September of 1997, “The Frick Collection has quietly remained a favorite institution to visitors from around the world since its celebrated opening as a museum and library in 1935. With this series of important projects coming to fruition virtually simultaneously, the Collection can engage a wider public in a number of exciting ways. And, I’m thrilled to see new electronic technologies, such as those employed by the Acoustiguide *ArtPhone* and the World Wide Web broaden the educational opportunities we have offered for so many decades.”

FREE *ARTPHONE* TOUR REPRESENTS EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION

Among the enhancements to the Collection’s services overseen by **Director Samuel Sachs II** is the

introduction of an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour in several languages. Referred to at The Frick Collection as an *ArtPhone*, the tour is provided by the Acoustiguide Corporation and began with the English-language version on July 21, 1998 and others to follow within months. The tour's commentary on the founder of the museum, his Gilded Age mansion, and the illuminating narrative on individual masterpieces in the Collection represents an important enhancement of the visitor's experience – at no additional charge. Likewise, the *ArtPhone* tour expands dramatically the information offered to non-English speakers, who comprise over 35% of The Frick Collection's visitors. *ArtPhone* is also available in French, German, Japanese, and Spanish (Italian added, courtesy of Bulgari, in 2000 to make a total of 6 languages).

A lightweight, cordless device that is hand-held (requiring no headphones) *ArtPhone* is a true departure from standard tape-recorded tours. Using digital technology, *ArtPhone* enables viewers to choose, with the unit's push-buttons, the item or room about which they wish to learn. Topics may be selected or repeated in any order, or skipped, giving the visitor freedom to create an individualized tour. Plaguing the traditional system, was the tendency of large groups of listeners to cluster around works as they progressed on their tours. The flexible “random access” of *ArtPhone*, instead, offers a smoother flow of traffic throughout an institution, as users create their own paths. The flexibility of *ArtPhone* is particularly well suited to The Frick Collection, where installations do not follow a chronological scheme, but provide, instead, an aesthetically rich blending of paintings, sculptures, and decorative artworks from various periods.

Comments Director Samuel Sachs II, “For many years the Board of Trustees and the staff have wanted to broaden the Collection's ability to offer educational tours to the general public. Our goal with *ArtPhone* was to comfortably enhance the contemplative atmosphere of the galleries, which are noted for their unique character of display. Lacking the distancing stanchions and protective vitrines of a more traditional museum, the Collection superbly offers visitors the experience of wandering through the private residence of its founder, Henry Clay Frick – where extended paper labels would be inappropriate. *ArtPhone*'s quiet units, ease of use, and technological capabilities answer beautifully to what The Frick Collection is, and to what it can offer.” The system also allows the tour to be expanded incrementally and conveniently in the future for viewers who want further information. Similarly, as new acquisitions and special individual loans are put on view, updates can be included easily.

Three hours of engaging material is available for selection on each tour. The *ArtPhone* project was coordinated by Curator **Edgar Munhall**, who wrote the script along with Associate Curator **Susan Grace Galassi**, in conjunction with Acoustiguide writers. The English version features the voices of seven artworld professionals, among them Frick staff members **Sachs, Munhall, and Galassi**, accompanied by speakers who discuss works by artists of their own native countries. For example **Nicholas Hall**, a dealer in Old Master paintings in London and New York, comments on work by British artists such as Constable, Gainsborough, and Reynolds. **Marco Grassi**, internationally celebrated paintings conservator talks about paintings by Duccio, Tiepolo, Titian, and others, while **Jacqueline Chambord**, Artistic Director, French Institute/Alliance Française addresses works of Boucher, Corot, and Fragonard. She and Munhall also contribute their voices to the French-language tour. The voice of **Inmaculada de Hapsburgo-Lorena**, CEO and President, The Spanish Institute, is one featured on the Spanish tour.

VISITORS AIDED BY REORGANIZED ENTRANCE AND RECEPTION HALLS

Simultaneously, the imposing Entrance Hall is in the process of being reorganized, and the public will find themselves directed in a new, more convenient route. As of July 21, they will have immediate access upon arrival to a generous, circular, desk located centrally in the Entrance Hall. One side of the desk will accommodate Information Staff, who will answer questions about The Frick Collection, its exhibitions, Membership, and public programs. In the adjoining Reception Hall, visitors now encounter a coat check room with a capacity that has been doubled in an effort enable more patrons to visit during busy weekdays and weekends. Visitors next purchase admission tickets at a newly installed desk in the north end of the Reception Hall. Finally, in approaching the galleries, the public will pass by the other side of the circular desk in the Entrance Hall, where they may obtain the optional, complimentary *ArtPhone* and receive instruction on its use. Stephen Saitas Designs is responsible for the design of the new desks and the Acoustiguide numbering system. Buttrick White & Burtis acted as consulting architects on the project.

NEW LIGHTING OFFERS TRUER VIEWS

In fact, the overall re-lighting of the galleries and individual works of art at The Frick Collection has been a major two-year project funded by the **Annie Laurie Aitken Charitable Trust**. This critical aspect of

display had not been modified significantly since the museum's opening sixty-three years ago. Now able to take advantage of important advances in lighting technology, the project has achieved astonishing yet subtle results. The serene visual quality of the galleries is preserved, but visitors now experience the Collection and rooms with an even illumination that shows the treasures to their best advantage.

The first phase of this project, initiated in 1997 under former Director Charles Ryskamp, involved replacing all of the existing picture lights attached to the frames of individual paintings, casting, in many cases limited overall illumination and glare over their subjects. Truer colors have been revealed through the use of halogen bulbs, which are energy-saving and produce a fraction of the heat of conventional lighting, thereby further improving the Collection's ability to preserve its masterpieces. The system used was developed in the United Kingdom to meet today's stringent museum conservation requirements, and this is its first application in the United States.

The exquisite visual results of the first phase served immediately to point out the deficiencies in the lighting in other parts of the museum. Under current Director **Samuel Sachs II**, the second phase of the project has begun, and seeks to provide an overall balance to the quality of lighting throughout the galleries. The main challenge of this phase is in improving the skylit spaces, of which there are several in The Frick Collection. Viewing conditions in these spaces are affected by outside weather, especially in the expansive West Gallery, for example, which is home to treasures by Goya, Veronese, Turner, Rembrandt, and Vermeer, as well as Renaissance furniture and bronze sculptures. An on-going study of light levels this year will help the museum better control illumination in such spaces in ways yet to be defined.

Both phases of the re-lighting project have been designed and implemented by the architectural firm **Bickerdike Allen Partners of England.**

WEBSITE ENGAGES “VISITORS” AROUND THE GLOBE

With the launching of a comprehensive site on the World Wide Web in June, potentially millions of Internet users will have already been welcomed to The Frick Collection with greater individual access to its resources and treasures. The site, www.frick.org incorporates several innovative features including a

“virtual tour” of the galleries in the institution’s Fifth Avenue mansion. “Virtual tours” remain a rare feature of websites worldwide, and this impressive version uses IPIX technology, software by Interactive Pictures Corporation that produces spherical, interactive images, referred to as “bubbles.” Visitors to the website can wander through the 1914 former Frick mansion and focus on the masterpieces they choose in the West Gallery, the Boucher, Dining, Fragonard, and Oval Rooms, and the Living Hall. The virtual tour was created by photojournalist Bill Swersey, who shot the elegant interiors with a 180-degree panoramic, or fisheye, lens. The resulting images were aligned with IPIX “stitching” software that created 360-degree views of the featured rooms. Interconnecting “hotspots” offer information about most items in this internationally acclaimed museum. Additional pages keep the public updated on the -- perhaps unexpected -- array of changing exhibitions, educational programs, special events, membership offerings, and news about The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library.

Of tremendous importance to students, art historians, journalists, collectors, dealers, and others are the resources of the Frick Art Reference Library, which was founded in 1920 and is one of the world’s greatest research centers for the study of Western art. The website is linked to FRESCO, the Frick Research Catalog Online. Established in 1996, FRESCO records over 50,000 source materials catalogued since 1985, which are accessible through the Library, and is a convenient tool for scholars and students alike. An online form is available for website users to submit reference questions to the Library staff. Additional search features and selected links to outside sites and databases are among the other offerings.

Samuel Sachs II comments, “I am thrilled that many more ‘visitors’ world-wide can use the Internet as a tool to reach The Frick Collection and the research collections of the Library. In recent years the staff has avidly embraced the use of technology in their work and the logical outgrowth of this is computerized access for the public to the resources of this institution by means of the World Wide Web. I am a strong advocate for the application of technology in the museum environment and I have urged the staff to think expansively about the possibilities in this realm. The ‘virtual museum’ enables people to browse the galleries from home and will spark the imagination, better preparing visitors for an on-site experience. Those who cannot travel to The Frick Collection will gain a wonderful sense of the museum’s stunning offerings and grand environment.” In this spirit, Sachs offers a personal, audio greeting to users of the website.

The consultant for the site's original design concept was Donald G. Dunham, a web developer who is currently doing graduate work at New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program. The Information Systems Office of The Frick Collection was responsible for initiating and coordinating the development of the site, and Webmaster Vivian Gill is responsible for its enhancement and maintenance. A steering committee representing all parts of the Collection and Library developed the content.



ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION

Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919), the coke and steel industrialist, philanthropist, and art collector, left his New York residence and his remarkable collection of Western paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts to the public "for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a gallery of art, [and] of encouraging and developing the study of fine arts and of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects." Designed and built for Mr. Frick in 1913 and 1914 by Thomas Hastings of Carrère and Hastings, the mansion provides a grand domestic setting reminiscent of the noble houses of Europe for the masterworks from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century that it contains. Of special note are paintings by Bellini, Constable, Corot, Fragonard, Gainsborough, Goya, El Greco, Holbein, Ingres, Manet, Monet, Rembrandt, Renoir, Titian, Turner, Velázquez, Vermeer, Whistler, and other masters. Mr. Frick's superb examples of French eighteenth-century furniture, Italian Renaissance bronzes, and Limoges enamels bring a special ambiance to the galleries, while the interior and exterior gardens and the amenities created since the founder's time in the 1930s and 1970s contribute to the serenity of the visitor's experience.

Renowned for its small, focused exhibitions and for its highly regarded concert series and lectures, The Frick Collection also operates the Frick Art Reference Library, founded by Henry Clay Frick's daughter, Miss Helen Clay Frick, located in an adjoining building at 10 East 71st Street. Both a research library and a photo archive, the Frick Art Reference Library is one of the world's great repositories of documents for the study of Western art. It has served the international art world for more than seventy-five years.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phones:

Collection (212) 288-0700

Library (212) 288-8700

Website: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: The Collection is located at 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

The Library is around the corner at 10 East 71st Street.

Museum Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesdays through Saturdays, and from 1pm to 6pm Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, December 24, and December 25. Limited hours (1:00 to 6:00pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Library Hours: 10am to 5pm, Monday through Friday; 9:30am to 1pm on Saturday.

Closed August and on Saturdays in June and July. Please call for holiday closure schedule.

Museum Admission: \$10, general public; \$5, students and senior citizens. Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult. Please see note below under "Tour Information" for important news.

Library Admission: free.

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: now included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour of the permanent collection, provided by Acoustiguide in English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop closes at 5:45pm, and is open otherwise, the same days and hours as the Museum

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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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Communications Officer

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