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from
THE FRICK COLLECTION

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**ESTABLISHMENT OF A
CENTER FOR THE HISTORY OF COLLECTING IN AMERICA**

The Frick Collection announces plans to establish a Center for the History of Collecting in America, to be located at the Frick Art Reference Library in New York. Comments Director Anne L. Poulet, “Interest in the field of art collecting in general has experienced a great resurgence among scholars, students, and members of the public. Now, with a planning grant from **The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation**, The Frick Collection has an opportunity to create an institutional base for expanding and nurturing this burgeoning field, with particular emphasis on collecting in America.” Adds Patricia Barnett, Andrew W. Mellon Librarian of the Frick Art Reference Library, “The extraordinary, often unique, bibliographic, photographic, and archival material in the Frick Art Reference Library, combined with its technological and human resources, as well as its location in New York, will make this institution an important touchstone for all who seek a deeper understanding of how art collecting developed and changed in our country. We have every expectation that the Center will also encourage those working in other fields to follow lines of inquiry on the socio-economic ramifications of art collecting. With generous support from the Delmas Foundation, we are now poised to move forward with this exciting initiative.”

In developing such a center, the objectives of the Frick Art Reference Library are to bring together scholars already engaged in this field to shed light on topics that hold potential for future study and to play a pro-active role by creating research tools needed for access to primary documents generated by art dealers and collectors in America. Programs will range from symposia and colloquia, to development of fellowship programs, academic programming, scholars in residence, and the publication of research tools.

Inge Reist, Chief of Research Collections and Programs at the Frick Art Reference Library, will oversee the Center and coordinate its activities with collaborating institutions. DeCourcy E. McIntosh, former Director of the Frick Art & Historical Center in Pittsburgh, co-author of *Collecting in the Gilded Age* and the author of a soon-to-be-published history of the Knoedler Gallery, will serve as a consultant. He brings to the project a great depth of knowledge on the history of collecting in America and the wisdom gained from years of experience at research centers both in America and Europe. Initially, McIntosh will evaluate and further define five recommendations formulated at a colloquium of colleagues and scholars held at the Frick in May 2005. First, is the creation of collaborative research tools, such as an online directory of extant archives of dealers and collectors. Second, still in need of underwriting, is the establishment of a short-term fellowship program supporting study at the Frick for a period of six to eight weeks. Third, is planning a seminar on aspects of collecting in America in conjunction with NYU's Institute of Fine Arts. Fourth, is the hosting of colloquia and symposia in conjunction with like-minded institutions. Finally, a long-term goal for the Center is offering an established scholar a full-year of support for serious post-doctoral research in this field.

HISTORY OF THIS FIELD OF STUDY

The study of European art collections and their patrons is a rich and centuries-old topic. By contrast, study of the formation of great American collections has largely concentrated on the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this post-Civil War period, a heightened sense of Nationalism gave rise to highly publicized Centennial celebrations and the emergence of museums as public institutions. Several ground-breaking organizations were founded that documented and preserved collections at historic properties in the United States, such as Mount Vernon, founded in 1853 by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

With growing momentum, American collections of fine and decorative arts were formed in the late nineteenth and twentieth century—many of which are now public institutions or parts thereof—by prominent figures including Henry du Pont, Isabella Stuart Gardener, Henry Flagler, Henry Clay Frick, William Randolph Hearst, Henry E. Huntington, Andrew Mellon, J. P. Morgan, and Duncan Philipps. How these celebrated holdings, as well as other lesser known private collections, were brought together has invited increasing attention in recent decades. Indeed, a sharp increase in scholarship about collecting has been noted during the past twenty-five years, and the study of the history of collecting is now one of the fastest growing fields within the community of art and decorative-arts historians. This trend is

evidenced in the twenty-year-old *Journal of the History of Collecting*, noteworthy publications by European scholars, and programs initiated by the Getty, such as the Provenance Index, now part of the Project for the Study of Collecting and Provenance.

THE FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY AS A RESEARCH CENTER

The Frick Art Reference Library was founded in 1920 by Helen Clay Frick as a memorial to her father, Henry Clay Frick (whose art collection and mansion were bequeathed to the public, later becoming the famed museum, The Frick Collection). In founding the Library, she vowed to provide a curious and growing public of art researchers with resources as valuable to them as her father's art collection came to be to the world's art lovers as one of the world's most treasured house museums. The mission of the Library was, and remains, to make available to a broad community of researchers materials for the study of art in the Western tradition from the fourth to the mid-twentieth century. With its emphasis on object-oriented research, the Library amassed a photoarchive that now boasts documented images of more than one million, in many cases still unpublished, works of art. Complementing this are the Library's nearly 300,000 books, periodicals, electronic resources, and annotated auction and exhibition catalogues. The collection is unrivaled in the United States, making it one of the world's most valued art research centers and the most comprehensive resource on the history of collecting and patronage. Today, scholars know that the Library's collections afford them unique combinations of images and bibliographic materials that bear witness to specific moments of creation and transfer of ownership, so essential to documenting individual works of art and the impulses of collectors.

Unlike most art libraries, whether affiliated with academic or museum parent institutions, the Frick Art Reference Library defined its own mission as an entity unto itself. As such, it became a "research center" before the term came into common parlance. It fostered the free exchange of opinion and sought the active participation of renowned scholars in building its collections. Seminars were held at the Library in its early years; scholars such as Bernard Berenson willingly helped define the structure for subject classification; and Dr. J. Hall Pleasants and Lawrence Park were perennially honored scholars in residence, doing pioneering research on American art. Scholars, working both here and abroad, actively and eagerly filled the library's image coffers with both the physical and intellectual fruits of their travels and their connoisseurship, as they continue to do today.

Under the leadership of Patricia Barnett, the Library's Research Program has been revitalized in recent years (see www.frick.org/library/research). Library exhibitions; expanded academic affiliations through adjunct teaching, internships, and graduate program orientations; and the annual **Dialogues on Art** panel discussions on collecting, auction houses, and special exhibitions have all laid the foundations for this next step of establishing the Center for the History of Collecting in America. Indeed, to complement the Library's planning for the Center, this year's **Dialogues on Art** evening, presented in association with Knoedler & Company, will be held at The Frick Collection on **Wednesday, May 17, at 6 p.m.** The topic will be *The House Museum: An Intersection of Public and Private Art Collecting*. For further information on this benefit lecture and to purchase tickets, please contact (212) 547-0706.

BASIC INFORMATION ON THE FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY

General Library Information Phone: (212) 288-8700

Web site: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 10 East 71th Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues

Hours: 10:00am to 5:00pm, Monday to Friday, and 9:30am to 1:00pm Saturdays. Closed Sundays, Holiday weekends, Saturdays in June and July, the month of August. Following its August closing, the Library will re-open to the public the day after Labor Day (Tuesday, September 6, 2005). Admission: use of the Library is 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

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