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from
THE FRICK COLLECTION

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**RAPHAEL'S *FORNARINA* ON VIEW IN THE UNITED STATES
FOR THE FIRST TIME
THREE-CITY TOUR BEGINS AT NEW YORK'S FRICK COLLECTION**

December 2, 2004, through January 30, 2005

This winter The Frick Collection will display *La Fornarina* by **Raphael** (1483–1520), a sumptuous and enigmatic work that will be on view in the United States for the first time ever. Generously lent by the National Gallery of



Raphael Sanzio (1483–1520), *La Fornarina*, c. 1520,
National Gallery of Art at the Palazzo Barberini, Rome

Art at the Palazzo Barberini, Rome, the painting stands out among the artist's works for its virtuoso depiction of a nude sitter and the diaphanous material she holds. Its exhibition at the Frick (December 2, 2004, through January 30, 2005) marks the beginning of a three-city tour that continues on to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Presentation of *La Fornarina* in New York is organized in collaboration with the **Foundation for Italian Art and Culture** and is made possible, in part, through the generosity of Hester Diamond, Jon and Barbara Landau, and the Fellows of The Frick Collection. Accompanying this special loan are a lecture and an illustrated publication with an essay by Dr. Claudio Strinati, Superintendent of the National Museums of Rome.

Comments Colin B. Bailey, Chief Curator of The Frick Collection, "We are delighted to display *La Fornarina* in the Frick's Oval Room and to present recent research that addresses its state of conservation and authorship to a general public. One of the most famous and immediately identifiable paintings in the canon of Western art, *La Fornarina* has exerted a fascination among artists and writers for nearly five centuries, and so it is tremendously exciting to have the painting—in the flesh, as it were—in New York for two months."

Painted around 1520 by Raphael Sanzio (known as Raphael)—an artist renowned for his mastery of female beauty—*La Fornarina* is at once an idealized likeness of the unknown woman and an ode to her goddess-like grace. The portrait's three-quarter-length view is typical of Renaissance portraiture, while the placement of the sitter's arms recalls the *Venus pudica* (modest Venus) seen in classical sculpture. This pose draws attention to the parts of her body she ostensibly attempts to conceal, intimating both innocence and seduction.

The ribbon tied around *La Fornarina*'s left arm prominently displays the name RAPHAEL URBINAS (Latin for Raphael of Urbino), marking both the work of art and the woman as possessions of the artist. This proprietary signature coupled with the painting's extraordinary sensuousness led to the long-held belief that the model had been Raphael's lover and muse. She was traditionally identified as Margherita Luti, the daughter of Francesco Senese, a baker (*fornaio*) from Siena, though this conjecture is far from certain. But the question of the identity of the "little baker girl" and the notion of her romance with Raphael have given this painting a special place in the history of art. Indeed, the work inspired interpretations and variations by artists from Raphael's contemporaries to Picasso. The ambiguity of expression that underscores *La Fornarina*'s charm has also provoked comparisons to Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*.

If certain sources about Raphael and his beautiful mistress are to be believed, his obsession with her may have led both to the genesis of this work and to the artist's untimely demise at the age of thirty-seven. According to Vasari, "Raphael could not give his mind to his work because of his infatuation for his mistress," claiming that the artist's sexual exploits caused the fever that killed him. Vasari's account attests to the power of beautiful women over Raphael, a power undeniably expressed in his portrayal of *La Fornarina*. Though her name and the details of her relationship with the artist may never be known, Raphael's brilliant communication of her irresistible allure ensures that the woman herself will never be forgotten.

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP PRESENTED IN ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST TIME

The subject of the painting is not the only issue to inspire debate. Its attribution to Raphael remained firm until the late eighteenth century, when, in his notes to the 1799 edition of Vasari, Pietro della Valle proposed that the color of *La Fornarina* was closer to that of the artist's pupil Giulio Romano. Throughout the succeeding two centuries, its authorship remained in dispute. However, recent analysis and scholarship offer new conclusions, which were presented in 2000 in a special exhibition at the Palazzo Barberini, Rome. The accompanying catalogue by Lorenza Mochi Onori and others (published in Italian only) argues that x-radiographs and studies reveal a quickly executed underdrawing, most likely done from life, a method that compares favorably with surviving sketches and drawings by Raphael. The examination also showed that the painting was left unfinished at the time of the artist's death.

Had Giulio or any other pupil of Raphael taken up the work at this time, it is unlikely that the work would have been left in this state. Furthermore, Onori makes comparisons between Giulio's drawing style and that of the *Fornarina* underdrawing and concludes that strong similarities are not apparent. The recent conservation study may also support the theory that the subject of the painting was, indeed, Raphael's lover: Onori contends that the fact that the drawing appears to be done from life hints at a level of intimacy with the model.

To accompany its presentation of *La Fornarina* in New York, The Frick Collection will publish a fully illustrated booklet written by Dr. Claudio Strinati, which includes—in English for the first time—a discussion of the recent studies. The booklet will be available through the Museum Shop of The Frick Collection, the institution's Web site (www.frick.org), or by calling (212) 288-0700.

FREE PUBLIC LECTURE

Date: Tuesday, November 30, 2004, 6:00 pm
Speaker: Dr. Maria Grazia Bernardini, Director, National Gallery of Art at the Palazzo Barberini, Rome
Title: “*La Fornarina*”: Raphael's Last and Most Surprising Masterpiece

In conjunction with a special loan to The Frick Collection from the Palazzo Barberini in Rome, this lecture will examine the legend surrounding Raphael's celebrated portrait and place it in an artistic and historical context. *There is no charge for this lecture; seating is limited.*

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR ITALIAN ART AND CULTURE

The Foundation for Italian Art and Culture was recently established with the purpose of making available great works of Italy's 3000-year-old artistic and cultural legacies to the American public. The Foundation works closely with the Italian Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the major Italian cultural institutions in order to facilitate the exhibition of Italian art in the U.S.

The organization of the loan of Raphael's *La Fornarina*, going from the National Gallery of Art at the Palazzo Barberini, Rome, to three American venues is the Foundation's inaugural project. While the Foundation's first projects are in the area of the visual arts, its activities are not limited to them. The Foundation will also develop and promote projects in the fields of music and opera, theater, and literature. The Foundation, whose board of directors is chaired by Mr. Daniele Bodini, is located at 400 Park Ave, 7th Floor, in New York.

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, 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 Phone: (212) 288-0700

Web site: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

Hours: open six days a week: 10am to 6pm on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 1pm to 6pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (1 to 6 pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Admission: \$12; senior citizens \$8; students \$5

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.

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: included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide INFORM® Audio Tour of the permanent collection. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

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.

#78, September 10, 2004 (version of November 16, 2004)

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