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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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FRESH PERSPECTIVES ON THE FRICK

REFURBISHMENT OF THE EAST GALLERY INSPIRES A COMPREHENSIVE RETHINKING OF ITS INSTALLATION, ACCOMPANIED BY A HISTORIC REHANGING OF THE DINING ROOM, AND A PAIR OF REMARKABLE LOANS IN THE WEST GALLERY



The reinstalled and relit East Gallery, The Frick Collection, New York

Visitors who love the Frick often believe that the permanent collection is unchanging and that the displays remain as they have been since the era when Henry Clay Frick and his family occupied the house. However, the museum's program of exhibitions, loans, and gallery renovations quite often affect the permanent displays. Sometimes, these changes are so subtle they go unnoticed; at other times they transform the galleries as well as our understanding of the works of art

presented there. A case in point was last summer's refurbishment of the Living Hall, which prompted the two-week installation of its six Renaissance masterpieces in the Oval Room. The experience of seeing these paintings in a different context was deeply appreciated by visitors aware of the special opportunity.

The Frick Collection has just completed a series of reinstallations that are broader in scope and will be longer lasting. The refurbishment of the East Gallery, which began in early August and continued into September, has provided an occasion for curators and conservators to rethink that room's display for the first time since 1945. In the West Gallery, the important loan of two late fifteenth-century Florentine paintings from The Mari-Cha Collection has introduced large-scale Renaissance narratives into that grand space. In the adjoining Oval Room, the display of four full-length Whistler portraits and a seascape, shown together for this summer's acclaimed

special exhibition, will be extended through the winter. Finally, the Dining Room has been reinstalled in the spirit of Henry Clay Frick's original conceit, which was to create an interior dominated by British full-length portraits of female sitters. In the new hang, Gainsborough's dramatic full-length paintings *The Hon. Frances Duncombe* (c. 1777) and *Mrs. Peter William Baker* (1781) enlivens the elegant English-style interior, just as they did in Frick's day. With five works by Gainsborough, including *The Mall in Saint James's Park* (c. 1783), the Dining Room is now the most concentrated presentation of this artist's masterpieces in New York.

Comments Director Anne Poulet, "Just as the Frick residence and collection were developed together—with acquisitions affecting architectural plans and vice versa—we are able to revisit the presentation of our holdings as well. Each time this occurs, our staff and the public may make fresh observations, and we are all rewarded with new insights." Adds Associate Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator Colin B. Bailey, "The subtle refurbishment of several spaces this autumn, to a degree unprecedented in our nearly seventy-five-year



The Dining Room, as reinstalled with full-length portraits in August 2009, The Frick Collection, New York

history as a museum, is a very exciting undertaking. In the Dining Room, we have returned to a type of installation that reflects Henry Clay Frick's taste and preferences, and reminds us how admired British eighteenth-century full-length portraits were by Gilded Age collectors, particularly when the subjects were beautiful women. The restoration of the East Gallery—a room added to the residence after Mr. Frick's death—has inspired us to reconsider the groupings of works in this room. We have been particularly attentive to issues of scale and lighting in enhancing the viewer's experience. Our goal has been to maintain and, in some cases, create for each gallery a distinct character, which enhances the depth of our holdings in each room."

EAST GALLERY REFURBISHED, RETHOUGHT, RELIT



El Greco, *Vincenzo Anastagi*, c. 1571–76, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York

At the core of this project was the refurbishment and relighting of the East Gallery, an addition made to the Frick mansion in the 1930s when the residence was converted into a public museum. Through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Jeremiah M. Bogert, the gallery's brown velvet wall covering has been replaced with a soft coral textile that provides a rich backdrop for the works of art. The floor and wall paneling were also refinished. These improvements provided the impetus for reconsidering the gallery's display. The transformation of the East Gallery was made complete with the addition of a new lighting system this month. In the mid-1990s, much of the picture lighting throughout the museum was updated through the generous support of the Annie Laurie

Aitken Charitable Trust at the direction of Mrs. Irene Roosevelt Aitken. Since then, the Fragonard Room's lighting has been redesigned, and the improvement of lighting in the Boucher Room is in the planning stages. The new system is the first change to that room's illumination since the museum's opening in 1935.

In reconsidering the display of paintings and sculpture in the East Gallery, the curators and conservators were particularly attentive to the relationship between the room's wide proportions and the scale of the pictures. In the new installation emphasis is given to a single full-length work, El Greco's incomparable *Vincenzo Anastagi* (1571–76). Placed at the center of the east wall, on axis with the room's main entrance, the *Anastagi* portrait commands the view into the gallery.

The arrangement of mid-sized paintings along the East Gallery's two long walls reflects the Frick's customary combination of portraits, landscapes, and genre pictures. Works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries predominate. Centered on the north wall, Guardi's *View of the Giudecca and the Zattere* (c. 1765–70), on loan from a private collection, anchors the room with a magnificent vista of Venice. Goya's masterful late work, *The Forge* (1815–20), hangs opposite on the south wall.



David, *Comtesse Daru*, 1810, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York



Goya, *Doña María de Puga*, 1824, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York

These imposing pictures are surrounded by balanced arrangements of smaller works that are often grouped by theme to invite comparison. The juxtaposition of David's *Comtesse Daru* (1810) with Goya's *María Martínez de Puga* (1824), for example, sets the former's finished society portrait against the latter's penetrating psychological study. All of the Collection's paintings by Goya are shown together for the first time, a gathering that allows a fresh appreciation for the breadth of the artist's output: from his delicate early masterpieces, such as the *Don Pedro, Duque de Osuna* (c. 1790s) to dark, vigorously painted works such as *The Forge* (c. 1815–20). Goya's late paintings inspired nineteenth-century artists like Manet, whose



Hogarth, *Miss Mary Edwards*, 1742, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York



Reynolds, *General John Burgoyne*, 1766, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York

Bullfight (1864) hang nearby, as does Millet's *Woman Sewing by Lamplight* (1870–72). The East Gallery retains many perennial favorites, like Chardin's *Lady with a Bird-Organ* (c. 1751) and Greuze's *Wool Winder* (c. 1759), a picture recently enhanced by a beautiful period frame. The new installation also encourages visitors to view afresh works that had become familiar fixtures in their old locations, such as Hogarth's *Miss Mary Edwards* (1742) and Reynolds's *General John Burgoyne* (1766), which

generally have hung as pendants in the Dining Room since the end of World War II.

MR. FRICK'S DINING ROOM

For longtime visitors to the Frick, little suggests that the gallery known as the Dining Room ever appeared otherwise. The furniture has remained the same since the house was a residence, and the paintings, which have always been of the British school, harmonize with the English-style interior. The polite domestic atmosphere evoked by this familiar installation masked the original intentions of Frick's display, which had established a more dynamic and opulent setting, featuring full-length portraits of beautiful women, painted with virtuoso brushwork in brilliant colors. Yet the records of his installations in 1918 and 1919 indicate that this is so.



Gainsborough, *The Hon. Frances Duncombe*, c. 1777, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York

The correspondence of 1913 between Henry Clay Frick and his interior designer, Sir Charles Allom, suggests that Frick conceived the installation of his paintings and the design of the Dining Room in concert. At that time, Frick owned three full-length works: Romney's *Henrietta, Countess of Warwick, and Her Children* (1787–89) and *Charlotte Lady Milnes* (1788–92), and Gainsborough's *The Hon. Frances Duncombe* (c. 1777). The grand scale of these pictures may have been, in part, responsible for the generous dimensions of the room's paneled walls, and thus inspired the conception of the room as a whole. In 1915 Frick acquired a smaller full-length portrait, Hoppner's *The Ladies Sarah and Catherine Bligh* (c. 1790), which was fitted above the fireplace. The location of these works is first noted in the catalogue of the collection compiled in 1918. By 1919, Frick moved to the Dining Room two previously purchased full-length canvases:

Gainsborough's *Mrs. Peter William Baker* (1781) and Van Dyck's *Anne, Countess of Clanbrassil* (c. 1636). These augmented Gainsborough's exquisite mid-sized genre scene, *The Mall in Saint James's Park* (c. 1783), which had been acquired in 1916. When Frick's Dining Room was complete, the full-length portraits stood out against the cool green walls, and their glittering frames, which he demanded be retained, were complemented by the elegant gilded moldings surrounding them.

After 1945, during the Collection's early years as a public museum, four of the Dining Room full-lengths were taken to the Oval Room, which had been designed in the early 1930s by the architect John Russell Pope as a formal gallery for large-scale paintings. Smaller pictures replaced them. Hogarth's half-length portrait of *Miss Mary Edwards* (1742) was moved from the Library to the Dining Room. The other replacements were new additions to the Collection, Reynolds's *General John Burgoyne* (1766), which was acquired in 1943, and Gainsborough's modestly scaled oval portraits of *Richard Paul Jodrell* (c. 1774) and *Grace Dalrymple Elliott* (1782), which entered the Collection in 1946.

When the Gainsborough full-length works *The Hon. Frances Duncombe* and *Mrs. Peter William Baker* were recently returned to the Dining Room, their dramatic effect highlighted Frick’s talent not only for acquiring paintings of superb quality, but also for envisioning settings that would show them to full advantage. The room’s modest proportions make the pictures seem exuberant, almost over-sized, evoking the effect they would have had in a grand eighteenth-century English domestic interior. In Frick’s



Gainsborough, *Mrs. Peter William Baker*, 1781, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York



Gainsborough, *The Mall in St. James's Park*, c. 1783, oil on canvas, The Frick Collection, New York

Dining Room of 1919, *The Hon. Frances Duncombe* and *Mrs. Peter William Baker* were hung beside *The Mall in Saint James’s Park*. Today that scene is flanked by Gainsborough’s oval portraits, while his full-lengths command the space from across the room. The Dining Room now presents five beautiful paintings by Gainsborough, allowing that artist’s work to become a splendid focus in a new installation ultimately indebted to the vision of Henry Clay Frick.

REMARKABLE LOANS ADDED TO THE WEST GALLERY

The Frick is often temporary home to special long-term loans that complement its permanent holdings. A pair of imposing, late fifteenth-century Florentine panel paintings are now displayed in the West Gallery, on loan from The Mari-Cha Collection. Painted in 1487 to embellish a marriage chamber, the so-called Tornabuoni-Albizzi panels depict scenes from the *Argonautica*, the famous myth of Jason’s quest for the golden fleece. *The Departure of the Argonauts* by Pietro del Donzello (1452–1509) and *The Argonauts in Colchis* by Bartolomeo di Giovanni (active 1475–1511) are rare examples from a complete suite of painted domestic decoration that illustrates the high level of achievement typical of the artists who worked in Florence at the same time as their better known contemporaries, Ghirlandaio and Botticelli. When recently shown at The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s exhibition *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, the panels notably illuminated aspects of Florentine culture during the golden age of Lorenzo the Magnificent. At the Frick these compelling works bring the gallery a fresh focus and offer a new point of departure for appreciating many of the Collection’s Renaissance masterpieces.

The Tornabuoni-Albizzi panels were painted for the marriage bedroom of Lorenzo di Giovanni Tornabuoni (1468–1497) and Giovanna degli Albizzi (1468–1488). The marriage, which took place in the summer of 1486, was a dynastic alliance between two patrician families that had been mediated by the *de facto* ruler of Florence, Lorenzo de’ Medici. Such political marriages were



Pietro del Donzello, also known as the Master of 1487 (1452–1509), *The Departure of the Argonauts*, 1487, oil on panel, The Mari-Cha Collection

celebrated typically with lavish entertainments and the commissioning of magnificent art objects and paintings, many of them meant to adorn the nuptial chamber. Lorenzo and Giovanna's was one of the most splendid of its kind. An inventory of the chamber, taken in 1497 after the couple's tragically early deaths, describes it as "beautiful." Ranking among the grandest accouterments of that room, the Tornabuoni- Albizzi panels mark a crucial transitional stage in the development of Florentine domestic interiors when the custom of decorating rooms with paintings set into wall paneling at shoulder height (*spalliere*) began to complement the practice of presenting newlywed couples with pairs of elaborately carved and painted chests (*cassoni*).

At The Frick Collection, this generous loan of paintings roughly contemporary with Renaissance masterpieces such as Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert* (c. 1480) offers a fascinating opportunity to compare developments in narrative and landscape among different Italian schools. Hanging at the far opposite end of the West Gallery, these brilliantly colored panels also complement Piero della Francesca's luminous *St. John the Evangelist*



Bartolomeo di Giovanni (active 1475–1511), *The Argonauts in Colchis*, 1487, tempera and oil on panel, The Mari-Cha Collection

(c. 1454–69). For the next two years in New York, these remarkable paintings from a Renaissance palace may be appreciated by museum goers in a palace built during the Gilded Age.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: (212) 288-0700

Website: 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; 11am to 5pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11am to 5pm) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Admission: \$18; senior citizens \$12; students \$5; "pay as you wish" on Sundays from 11am to 1pm

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection.

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 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.

#149, October 2, 2009

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