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from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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WITH SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES, THE FRICK UPDATES ITS HISTORIC ENAMELS ROOM CASES AND CONSERVES A REMARKABLE COLLECTION

New York's Frick Collection is home to one of the most important groups of Renaissance enamels in the world, ranking alongside those of the Musée du Louvre in Paris, The Wallace Collection and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. The forty-two enamels in The Frick Collection were produced in the city of Limoges, in central France, from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth century. A selection of the Frick's enamels returned to view this month after a year's absence.



The refurbished and relit Enamels Room at The Frick Collection; Photo: Michael Bodycomb

During this period, many objects were examined and treated for the first time since they entered the Collection. This project was inspired by advances in the last decade in the understanding of Renaissance enamel production



The refurbished case on the north wall contains highlights from Henry Clay Frick's great purchase of enamels from the Morgan estate, many of which have undergone treatment and cleaning; Photo: Michael Bodycomb

and composition. It has also benefited from a major international enamel conservation conference held at the Frick. The consensus about the care of enamels has led many institutions to place them in environments of absolute temperature stability with a lower relative humidity than had been recommended in the past. With this new standard in mind, The Frick Collection rebuilt the historic cases created in 1935 for its Enamels Room by the eminent architect John Russell Pope (1874–1937). The ornate vitrines, which evoke the sense of a princely collector's cabinet, offer an appealing context for

the presentation of enamels. The Frick's cases have been completely sealed, allowing for optimal climate control by circulating the air through an automated internal humidification and dehumidification system. The cases are constructed of neutral materials conducive to prolonged display, and they have been relit using customized prototype fixtures developed for the museum by Steven Weintraub of A.P.S. (Art Preservation Services, based in New York). The new devices employ energy-efficient L.E.D. (light-emitting diode) illumination. The combined effect of these efforts, along with the treatment of the objects, is that the Frick's jewel-like enamels now reveal their brilliance as never before and their long-term preservation is assured.

Comments Conservator and project coordinator Joseph Godla, "We are grateful to the **National Endowment for the Humanities** for a generous award that supported this important initiative. The agency joined us in recognizing not only the importance of the collection, but the value and rarity of its display in historic cases. We were able to incorporate the latest standards on enamel preservation and presentation and are also thrilled that these holdings can now be better seen and appreciated by the public. It has been a cross-departmental project, involving Assistant Objects Conservator Julia Day, who treated the objects and who organized the conference; Charlotte Vignon, Associate Curator of Decorative Arts; and Curator Denise Allen. Also involved in the project were William Trachet, Senior Conservation Technician, Adrian Anderson, Senior Gallery Technician, and Stephen Saitas Design; R. H. Guest, Inc.; and Canstruct L.L.C. We have all enjoyed working closely with Steven Weintraub, who consults on museum environments. The unique line of light fixtures he created for us will surely inform additional projects at the Frick and perhaps at other institutions."



Andrea Briosco, called Riccio (1470–1532), *Lamp*, c. 1510–24, bronze, 6 5/8 inches high, The Frick Collection, New York; Photo: Michael Bodycomb

The current display in the Frick's Enamels Room features fourteen enamels as well as two remarkable ceramic pieces from the period, a rare French Saint-Porchaire porcelain ewer purchased by Henry Clay Frick in 1918 and an Italian counterpart, a beautifully painted maiolica dish. Also on view in the refurbished cases are several of the finest Renaissance bronzes in the collection. These small-scale and finely detailed works are best appreciated in an intimate gallery within cases. Among the highlights of the Frick's renowned bronze collection to be displayed there are Riccio's *Oil Lamp*, Grandi's *Hand Bell*, and Severo da Ravenna's *Queen Tomyris with the Head of Cyrus*. On loan from the Quentin Foundation is a unique and delicate wax model by Giambologna. Returning to the gallery are several gemlike Italian paintings by the artists Cimabue, Duccio, Piero de la Francesca, and others.

ABOUT RENAISSANCE LIMOGES ENAMELS

Beginning in the Middle Ages, Limoges was an important center for the production of artistic enamels, and by the end of the fifteenth century, materials and techniques had developed that allowed enamellers to create works that could compete in artistry with tempera and oil paintings on panels or canvas. Limoges enamellers reached such a high level of technical and artistic excellence that today their works are considered to be the finest painted enamelware ever produced in Europe. So-called "painted" enamels were created by applying enamel—ground

glass, colored with metallic oxides, and worked into a paste—to a metal (usually copper) support. The different colors of opaque and translucent enamel were meticulously layered in order to achieve painterly effects of shading and modeling. Repeatedly fired in a kiln, often after each layer of enamel was applied, the vitreous substance fused to the metal, hardening when cooled to achieve a lustrous finish with vivid luminosity. Pieces were sometimes enriched with gold and silver foils placed under the enamel to create shimmering iridescent tones, which could be further enhanced with gold paint. It was a complex process, and the resulting objects were extremely valuable. Only monarchs, important church dignitaries, and noblemen of the highest rank were able to commission such pieces.



Pierre Reymond, *Casket: Old Testament Subjects*, Limoges, sixteenth century, enamel on copper with gilt metal frame, 4 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches. The Frick Collection, New York; Photo: Michael Bodycomb

The enamels at the Frick represent the range of artistic production in Limoges from the late fifteenth through the early seventeenth century, including secular and religious objects, tableware, and portraits. The religious objects are typically triptychs illustrating biblical scenes, conceived as portable devotional works for Renaissance noblemen and clergy. Tablewares such as ewers, platters, salt cellars, and candlesticks were considered too precious to be used and were instead placed on sideboards to create an impressive display demonstrating the owner's cultivation, taste, and wealth. Portraits offered an enduring record of a

subject's likeness and a dazzling display of delicate modeling, as exemplified by the virtuosity of the mid-sixteenth-century enameller Léonard Limousin. The Frick's collection contains works by most of the major enamel painters of Limoges, from one of the earliest identifiable artists, the so-called Master of the Baltimore and Orléans Triptychs of the late fifteenth century, to the masters in the Courteys family in the sixteenth century. A number of these pieces are signed or dated, providing crucial points of reference for the study of Limoges enamels. The Frick's entire collection of Limoges enamels was published in 1977 by Philippe Verdier, in volume VIII of *The Frick Collection: An Illustrated Catalogue*.

HOW THE ENAMELS ENTERED THE FRICK COLLECTION

The collection of enamels now in The Frick Collection was assembled during the first decade of the twentieth century by the American financier and art collector John Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913). This assemblage, which rapidly became one of the most important of its kind in private hands, was on loan for an exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum until 1912. That year, Morgan's entire collection of thousands of works of art, including Limoges enamels, antiquities, Gothic tapestries, Italian bronze statuettes and maiolica, Renaissance and Baroque gilt-silver, ivories, glasses, watches and clocks, jewelry, rock crystal, Meissen porcelain, eighteenth-century French furniture and decorative arts, and Old Master paintings, was shipped from London and Paris to New York for a



Léonard Limousin, *Triumph of the Eucharist with Members of the House of Guise*, Limoges, c. 1560–70, enamel on copper, 7 5/8 x 9 7/8 inches. The Frick Collection, New York; photo: Michael Bodycomb

two-year loan exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The exhibition, which opened in 1914, is today considered one of the first museum “blockbusters.” It offered the American public, including Henry Clay Frick, the rare opportunity to admire Morgan’s wide-ranging collection of European art and set the standard for many American collectors.



Workshop of Pierre Reymond, *The Mocking of Christ*, Limoges, mid-sixteenth century, enamel on copper, 8 x 6 1/4 inches, The Frick Collection, New York; photo: Michael Bodycomb

Morgan died in 1913, one year before the opening of the Metropolitan Museum’s exhibition, leaving his entire art collection to his son, Jack Morgan. This was a great surprise to the public and the press, as well as officials at the Metropolitan Museum, all of whom expected that a large donation would be made to that institution. Instead, between 1915 and 1916, Jack Morgan sold more than half of his father’s art collection in order to pay inheritance taxes. In 1915 the powerful art dealer Joseph Duveen began buying substantial sections of the Morgan collection, including all of the Italian Renaissance bronzes, the Italian Renaissance maiolica, and the Limoges painted enamels. Duveen immediately resold the enamels to three serious collectors of European art, all of them by now good clients of the firm: William Randolph Hearst, Charles Taft, and Henry Clay

Frick. The enamels purchased by Hearst are now at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, those acquired by Taft are at the Taft Museum of Art in Cincinnati, and those purchased by Frick are housed at The Frick Collection.

In Frick’s new home at 1 East 70th Street, the enamels were installed in a small room—originally Frick’s private study—at the rear of the large paintings gallery. The purchase of the enamels prompted Frick to transform the study into an exhibition space, renamed for this purpose the “Limoges Gallery.” The preeminent contemporary collectors, including Philip and Robert Lehman, P.A.B. Widener and his son Joseph, and George and Florence Blumenthal, all chose to re-create Italian Renaissance rooms to showcase their holdings from this period. Frick was the only important American collector of the time to display a significant collection of Limoges enamels along with Renaissance furniture in a gallery evocative of a French interior—a bold and unusual choice.



The Enamels Room of The Frick Collection, 1930. Photo: The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives

ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION AND FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY

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 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; 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 \$15; students \$10; "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.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Head of Media Relations & Marketing, or Alexis Light, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing

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