

The temporary new home of The Frick Collection



***Living Histories: Queer Views and Old Masters* to Offer Juxtapositions Between Works by New York Artists and Frick Paintings**

Doron Langberg, Salman Toor, Jenna Gribbon, and Toyin Ojih Odutola in Conversation with Vermeer, Holbein, and Rembrandt

New York (September 28, 2021)— The installation at Frick Madison has prompted new ways of looking at the Frick’s paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts—works predominantly made in Europe from the thirteenth through nineteenth centuries. *Living Histories: Queer Views and Old Masters* is the latest addition in a broader program in the past decade that has celebrated a range of voices and perspectives through digital productions, installations, publications, and collaborations. At various times during the next year, four New York-based artists will engage with Old Master paintings in the permanent collection, each presenting a single new work on the second floor, where paintings by Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Holbein are displayed. These “pop-up” presentations, each running for a limited number of months, will initiate fresh conversations with the institution’s traditional figurative holdings, with particular emphasis on issues of gender and queer identity typically excluded from narratives of early modern European art.

The series begins on Thursday, September 30, presenting one painting each by Doron Langberg (b. Yokneam Moshava, Israel, 1985) and Salman Toor (b. Lahore, Pakistan, 1983) framed amidst those in the Frick’s Northern European galleries. Both works will be on view at Frick Madison into January 2022. Langberg will present a painting, *Lover*, in conversation with Hans Holbein the Younger’s iconic portrait of Sir Thomas More, whose usual counterpart at the Frick, Holbein’s Sir Thomas Cromwell, will be temporarily on view in the fall exhibition *Holbein: Capturing Character in the Renaissance* at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. At the same time, Toor’s painting *Museum Boys* will be shown alongside *Mistress and Maid* and *Officer and Laughing Girl* by Johannes Vermeer. It temporarily takes the place of Vermeer’s *Girl Interrupted at Her Music*, which is on loan this fall to the special exhibition *Johannes Vermeer: On Reflection* at the Dresden Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister. Next winter and spring, the Frick will feature pairings by artists Jenna Gribbon (b. Knoxville, Tennessee, USA, 1978) and Toyin Ojih Odutola (b. Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1985) responding to works by Holbein and Rembrandt, respectively. The

rest of the third- and fourth-floor Frick Madison installations, showing highlights from the Frick's holdings, will remain largely unchanged during this project, offering further context and depth to these confrontations between past and present on the second floor. This year-long project will be accompanied by ongoing programming, and a publication will present reflections on the experiences of the artists and curatorial team. *Living Histories* has been jointly organized by Xavier F. Salomon, Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Curator, and Aimee Ng, Curator.

Comments Ian Wardropper, Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Director, "We are thrilled and rewarded by the opportunities presented by our residency at the Breuer building. The positive responses to the reframing of our collection have encouraged us to continue to expand the range of conversations we have around our objects and the breadth of ideas we explore. With this project, involving artists who have been inspired by works at the Frick in their own practice, we invite a rich array of contemporary voices, as we have done more frequently over the past decade. *Living Histories* builds on our seven-year academic partnership with the Ghetto Film School, installations by artists Arlene Shechet (2016–17) and Edmund de Waal (2019), as well as the acclaimed anthology *The Sleeve Should Be Illegal & Other Reflections on Art at the Frick* (2021), which features meditations on our collection by sixty-two artists, writers, and other cultural figures."

Adds Xavier F. Salomon, Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator, "As curators charged with the care and interpretation of our great collection, we want to explore and challenge our audiences—living artists among them—to reflect on how Old Masters retain their relevance today. With this groundbreaking project, we pair European works from centuries past with ones newly commissioned for a fresh dialogue that looks at broad issues around human relationships as represented in paintings. As a queer professional in the arts, I find this exploration significant and at the same time personally familiar. We welcome our audiences to consider alongside us what they see in Old Master as well as contemporary works, from the ambiguity of painted narratives to the assumptions that are part of our viewing experience of portraiture."

Comments Aimee Ng, Curator, "Another dimension to the selection of artists, each critically acclaimed and creating in distinct figurative modes, is that they represent the diversity and complexity of our city, one rich with queer life and history intersected with many other identities. Among Doron, Salman, Jenna, and Toyin—like so many of the Frick's staff and the museum's founder, Henry Clay Frick—none are originally from New York but all chose this city as a home for their careers and relationships. To bring together in this project their contemporary perspectives and our beloved Frick works is an exciting celebration of the past and present, and of the power of building conversations across histories, geographies, and cultures."

ABOUT DORON LANGBERG AND HIS WORK

Doron Langberg lives and works in New York City. He received his M.F.A. from the Yale University School of Art, holds a B.F.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and a Certificate from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), and attended the Yale Summer School of Music and Art, Norfolk. Langberg has attended the EFA Studio Program, Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program, Yaddo artist residency, and the Queer Art Mentorship Program. He is the recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters's John Koch Award in Art, an Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant, and the Yale Schoelkopf Travel Prize. Langberg's first solo exhibition in London, *Give Me Love*, is at Victoria Miro until November 6, 2021. Langberg's work will be included in a major group exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston in 2022. Previously, his work has been shown at institutional venues including the LSU Museum of Art, American Academy of Arts and Letters, Leslie-Lohman Museum, and the PAFA Museum. His work is in the collections of the ICA Miami, PAFA,

Museum and RISD Museum. This summer Langberg's work was featured in the show *Intimacy: New Queer Art from Berlin and Beyond* at the Schwules Museum, Berlin.

Langberg's paintings celebrate the physicality of touch—in subject matter and process. His intimate yet expansive take on relationships, sexuality, nature, family, and the self proposes how painting can both portray and create queer subjectivity. *Lover* captures a domestic moment: the subject at home and undressed, nestled in a sofa reading a paper.



Like Holbein's portrait of Sir Thomas More, *Lover* is based in direct observation and close study of the sitter. Though in much different ways, the surface treatment and paint handling in both portraits animate their respective figures, speaking to a desire—as stated by Holbein himself—that the artists share for their paintings to feel as alive as their subjects. With expressive gestures, abstracted depictions, and broad swaths of intense color, Langberg combines the evidence of his painting process with naturalistic portrayals of the human form, carefully noting its contours, textures, and details like body hair and the fall of light on flesh. Where, for Holbein, the illusion of tactility—a stubbled chin, a velvet sleeve—conveys his own mastery as a painter and the material wealth and power of his sitters, for Langberg, physical and illusory tactility eroticize his subject and his viewers' acts of looking. By engaging the viewer in this desirous relationship with the paint and subject, Langberg brings us into his queer world.

ABOUT SALMAN TOOR AND HIS WORK

Salman Toor's first solo museum exhibition, *How Will I Know*, was presented to critical acclaim at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2020–21. Other recent solo shows include *The Pleasure Pavilion: A series of installations* | Salman Toor (Luhring Augustine, Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY) and *I Know a Place* (Nature Morte Gallery, New Delhi, India). Toor's work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions and projects, including *Any distance between us* (RISD Museum, Providence, RI); *and I will wear you in my heart of heart* (FLAG Art Foundation, New York); *Art on the Grid: 50 Artists' Reflections on the Pandemic* (Public Art Fund, New York); *Relations: Diaspora and Painting* (PHI Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montreal); *Duro Olowu: Seeing Chicago* (Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago); *You Here?* (Lahore Biennale 2018, Pakistan); and the 2016 Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India. His work is in the permanent collections of the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, New York; M Woods Museum, Beijing, China; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Tate, London; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; the Wake Forest University Art Collection, Winston-Salem, NC; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Toor is the recipient of a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant. An image of his painting *Music Room* (2021) is featured on the Hayward Gallery Billboard, London, through spring 2022. Toor earned his Masters of Fine Art at Pratt Institute in 2009.



Toor's figurative paintings depict quotidian moments in the lives of fictional young, brown, queer men ensconced in contemporary cosmopolitan culture. His work *Museum Boys* draws on the quiet domestic exchanges in Vermeer's paintings and alludes to their contents with a buckled hat, a pale shawl, and a pearl earring. Set in an allegorical space filled with imaginary sculpture, a ghost-like figure in the foreground smiles coily at the man in the middle ground, echoing the mood of tipsy flirtation in Vermeer's *Officer and Laughing Girl*. The work's feeling of arrival and anticipation mirrors the exchange depicted in Vermeer's *Mistress and Maid*. Whereas the objects in Vermeer's paintings illustrate the growing influence of the Dutch Republic on

international trade, the surreal menagerie in Toor's painting conjures queer mythology and colonial plunder. The heap of objects and limbs in the vitrine between the figures signifies greed, lust, exhaustion, and consumerism, re-organized and re-compiled for a museum space. The vitrine hints at a darker aspect of Vermeer's prosperous subjects, beneficiaries of the global trade of spices, porcelain, and much more. Bringing together a love of narrative, questions of cultural ownership, and queer taxonomy, Toor's *Museum Boys* is a sultry, sidelong glance at the canonical world of the Old Masters.

ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION AND FRICK MADISON

Internationally recognized as a premier museum and research center, The Frick Collection is known for its distinguished Old Master paintings and outstanding examples of European sculpture and decorative arts. The collection originated with Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919), who bequeathed his home, paintings, sculptures, and decorative arts to the public for their enjoyment. The institution's holdings—which encompass masterworks from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century—have grown over the decades, more than doubling in size since the opening of the museum in 1935. A critical component of the institution is the Frick Art Reference Library, founded in 1920 by Helen Clay Frick, daughter of the museum's founder. Recognized as one of the world's top art history research centers, it has served students, scholars, and members of the public free of charge for generations.

The Frick's historic buildings are currently closed for renovation. Honoring the Frick's architectural legacy, the plan designed by Selldorf Architects will provide unprecedented access to the 1914 residence, while preserving the intimate visitor experience and beloved galleries. The plan will create new spaces for the display of art, conservation, education, and programs, while improving amenities and overall accessibility.

During the renovation, the museum and library collections remain accessible five blocks north at Frick Madison, the Marcel Breuer-designed building that was once the home of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Audiences may enjoy a substantial gathering of highlights from the Frick, reframed in a setting that inspires fresh perspectives. In a departure from the Frick's customary presentation style, works are organized at Frick Madison chronologically and by region, allowing for fresh juxtapositions and new insights about treasured paintings and sculptures by Bellini, Clodion, Gainsborough, Goya, Holbein, Houdon, Ingres, Piero della Francesca, Rembrandt, Titian, Turner, Velázquez, Vermeer, Whistler, and many others. The installation also spotlights the Frick's impressive holdings of decorative arts and sculpture, as well as rarely seen works.

Images: Doron Langberg, photo: Rafael Martinez; Salman Toor, photo: Salman Toor; Jenna Gribbon, photo: Nir Arieli; Toyin Ojih Odutola, photo by Beth Wilkinson; Doron Langberg (b. Yokneam Moshava, Israel, 1985), *Lover*, 2021, oil on linen, 30 x 24 inches, Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro, © Doron Langberg; Salman Toor (b. Lahore, Pakistan, 1983), *Museum Boys*, 2021, oil on panel, 30 x 40 inches, © Salman Toor; Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York, photo by Farzad Owrang

INTERACT

   /FrickCollection

#FrickMadison

#DoronLangberg

#SalmanToor

#JennaGribbon

#ToyinOjihOdutola

BASIC INFORMATION

Website: www.frick.org

Building project: www.frickfuture.org

Bloomberg Connects App: frick.org/app

Frick Madison visitor address: 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York, NY 10021

Museum Hours: Thursday through Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; closed Monday through Wednesday. See website for holiday schedule.

Admission: Timed tickets are required and may be purchased online. \$22 general public; \$17 seniors and visitors with disabilities; \$12 students. Admission is always free for members. Pay-what-you-wish admission is offered Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Please note: Children under ten are not admitted to the museum.

COVID-19/health and safety policies: frick.org/visit/guidelines

Ticket purchase link: frick.org/tickets. For questions: admissions@frick.org

Group Museum visits: Currently suspended. Please visit our website to learn more about virtual group visits.

Public Programs: A calendar of online, virtual, and video events is available on our website.

Shop: Open during museum hours as well as online daily.

Coat Check: Closed until further notice. Visitors will not be allowed to carry oversized items into the galleries.

Refreshments: A light menu, offered by Joe Coffee, will be available during museum hours.

Subway: #6 local to 77th Street station; #Q to 72nd Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 75th Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 74th Street

Museum mailing address: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10021

Photography: Allowed only in the Frick Madison Lobby.

Reading Room: Access is offered by appointment Tuesday through Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For further information, visit frick.org/tickets.

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For further press information, please contact us at communications@frick.org.