

The temporary new home of The Frick Collection

Living Histories Project Continues This Winter and Spring

A Painting by Jenna Gribbon to be Shown in Conversation with Holbein's Portrait of Thomas Cromwell

JANUARY 27 THROUGH MAY 22, 2022



New York (January 20, 2022)— The Frick's acclaimed reframing, ongoing in its temporary location known as **Frick Madison** during the renovation of its historic buildings, has given the public a chance to view collection highlights in a very different setting. In recent months, the curatorial team has presented a project in the Northern European galleries that, over the course of a year, welcomes the voices of four contemporary artists. Each presents a single new work in conversation with an iconic painting from the Frick's collection, with particular emphasis on issues of gender and queer identity typically excluded from narratives of early modern European art. This winter and spring, *Living Histories: Queer Views and Old Masters* continues with a painting by **Jenna Gribbon** (b. Knoxville, Tennessee, USA, 1978), shown with the portrait *Thomas Cromwell* by Hans Holbein the Younger. This juxtaposition follows the inaugural presentations by Salman Toor (b. Lahore, Pakistan, 1983) and Doron Langberg (b.

Yokneam Moshava, Israel, 1985), whose works were on view this fall and winter alongside paintings by Johannes Vermeer and Holbein, respectively. This spring and summer, the Frick will present the final chapter in the series, a portrait by Toyin Ojih Odutola (b. Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1985), shown alongside Frick works by Rembrandt.

Living Histories is jointly organized by Xavier F. Salomon, Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator, and Aimee Ng, Curator. It is the most recent project in past years in a series of collaborations with living artists that have included publications and lectures, as well as installations at the Frick mansion by Arlene Shechet and Edmund de Waal. The artists collaborating on *Living Histories*—like so many of the Frick's staff and the museum's founder, Henry Clay Frick—are not originally from New York, but all chose this city as a home for their careers and relationships. To this project, the artists bring contemporary perspectives on Frick works, resulting in a celebration of the past and present that reveals the power of creating conversations across histories, geographies, and cultures.

Comments Salomon, "We have deeply enjoyed collaborating with a group of artists whose work engages with traditions of European art history. They have been most generous in sharing their thoughts on the power of our traditional figurative holdings, creating not only new paintings, but developing with us audio and video content accessible to audiences everywhere." Adds Curator Aimee Ng, "We're so excited to have Jenna's painting at Frick Madison. Created in response to Holbein's portraits of powerful men, her portrait sets up a new conversation with the Frick's historic art and its legacies,

speaking across centuries and in very different contexts to look at where we are now. When I think of Holbein’s portraits at the Frick—*Thomas More* (on loan to The Morgan Library & Museum while Jenna’s painting is up) and *Thomas Cromwell*—I think also of the defining events of their lives and their roles in King Henry VIII’s disposal of wives to bear a son. Jenna’s painting intrudes on that narrative, bringing to light dynamics of power, gender, and sexuality at play then and now.”

ABOUT JENNA GIBBON AND HER WORK



Jenna Gribbon (b. Knoxville, Tennessee, 1978) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Her syncretic canvases draw on several centuries of painting: figures disporting themselves in a sylvan setting recall Fragonard’s *fêtes galantes*; interiors with swiftly articulated walls evoke the cursory backgrounds of Mary Cassatt; gently distorted architectural features summon the *laissez-faire* depictions of Karen Kilimnik. Sampling freely from various representational techniques and movements, Gribbon’s paint handling ranges from the virtuosic to the intentionally slapdash; fast, impressionistic strokes often abut minutely illustrated details, highlighting the artist’s interest in collapsing numerous pictorial strategies into a single canvas. Her work has been exhibited widely in the United States and abroad. She has been included in exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville; and the Kurpfälzisches Museum, Heidelberg (upcoming). Gribbon is represented by Fredericks & Freiser, NY and

MASSIMODECARLO. This past fall Gribbon’s work was the subject of a solo exhibition, *Uscapes*, at Fredericks & Freiser, New York. MASSIMODECARLO will present a solo show in London in early 2022. A monograph of Gribbon’s work was published by GNYP GmbH in September 2021.

Jenna Gribbon questions conventions of portraiture, exploring gendered gazes, presentations of power, and ideas of viewership. Inspired by Hans Holbein’s acute attention to detail, Gribbon creates illusions of tactility in the painting of flesh, hair, fabric, and much else—testaments to the physical presence of the subjects and the painter’s acts of looking at them. Here, Gribbon intervenes in the traditional pairing of two historical men: for about a century, Holbein’s portraits of Thomas More and Thomas Cromwell—mortal enemies in the English king Henry VIII’s quest for absolute power—have faced each other in the Frick’s galleries.

Gribbon’s *What Am I Doing Here? I Should Ask You the Same* (above) joins Holbein’s *Thomas Cromwell* in the galleries. Standing in for *Thomas More*, the painting breaks the historical dynamic of two men in profile, her subject facing frontally, with legs splayed. Gribbon supplants the traditional male gaze with that of a queer woman artist, her subject of ambiguous gender. Her sitter wears six rings—to Cromwell’s one—and an intensely violet velvet suit and a red coat, the color and heightened textural effects verging on camp. Set under glaring light and in the home she shares with the artist, Gribbon’s subject is imbued with a theatrical quality, her torso and breast uncovered, bare-faced and unabashed in confronting the viewer. Gribbon’s painting is an homage to Holbein’s art and an exploration of histories and legacies, initiating conversation between portraits then and now, and viewers past and present.



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, Bronzino, Clodion, Gainsborough, Goya, Holbein, Houdon, Ingres, Piero della Francesca, Rembrandt, Titian, Turner, Velázquez, Vermeer, and many others. The installation also spotlights the Frick’s impressive holdings of decorative arts and sculpture, as well as rarely seen works.

Images: Jenna Gribbon; photo: Nir Arieli. Jenna Gribbon (b. Knoxville, Tennessee, 1978), *What Am I Doing Here? I Should Ask You the Same*, 2022, oil on linen, 48 x 36 inches, courtesy the artist, Fredericks & Freiser, NY, and MASSIMODECARLO; photo: Joseph Coscia Jr.; Hans Holbein the Younger, *Thomas Cromwell*, 1532-33, oil on oak panel, 30 3/4 × 25 1/4 × 1/4, The Frick Collection, New York; photo: Michael Bodycomb.

INTERACT

   /FrickCollection

#FrickMadison

#LivingHistories

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.