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from

THE FRICK COLLECTION

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FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY PROVIDES PUBLIC ACCESS TO RARE HISTORICAL CATALOGS THROUGH ITS DIGITIZATION PROGRAM

AND A RELATED ONLINE EXHIBITION DEBUTS *DOCUMENTING ART COLLECTIONS IN GILDED AGE NEW YORK*



Mrs. Philip M. Lydig (Rita H. de Alba de Acosta),
Ignacio Zuloaga, photo Ira W. Martin. Courtesy
Frick Art Reference Library Photoarchive.

The Frick Art Reference Library is famed for its wealth of resources, including books, exhibition and auction catalogs, periodicals, photograph collections, archives, and ephemera—a notable percentage of which are unique among like institutions. As a public resource for art historical research—considered one of the top five such libraries in the world—it is also a leader in digitization. For this reason, the institution has received a series of four grants from the Metropolitan New York Library Council to fund [*Documenting the Gilded Age*](#), a project focused on the digitization and greater accessibility of historical materials that document art collections in Gilded Age New York. Online exhibitions created by library staff highlight each phase of the project and provide historical context. Phases one (2011) and two (2012), conducted by the Frick Art Reference Library and the Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives, digitized ephemeral exhibition checklists, pamphlets, and catalogs from eleven historically significant

galleries, society clubs, and arts associations operating from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Phase three (2013), a project of the Frick Art Reference Library and the William Randolph Hearst Archive at Long Island University, digitized auction catalogs and archival materials for the same time period, with a focus on decorative arts. The recently completed phase four, [*Documenting Art Collections in Gilded Age New York, presents*](#) seventy-nine private collection catalogs held at the Frick Art Reference Library, including those of prominent industrialists and

notable women, as well as unnamed or less well-known collectors. These newly digitized catalogs and a related online exhibition at frick.org/GA4 make hundreds of rare and unique materials available to the public online for the first time.

The digitized catalogs represent collections formed during a period of great prosperity in America. With wealth, curiosity, and often a civic-minded drive to educate and please their fellow citizens, the cultural leaders of the Gilded Age embraced the opportunities afforded them, purchasing art from cash-poor British and European aristocrats and amassing impressive collections of their own, many of which would ultimately form the bedrock of America's great museums.

Although the pace of art collecting rapidly increased across the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, New York was the epicenter of the art market and boasted the greatest number of private art collections and art associations during this period.



Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1635, from Charles T. Yerkes collection of very valuable paintings, 1910; later acquired by Henry Clay Frick

As a group, the Frick's collection catalogs make clear that art collecting was a significant part of the fabric of city life. True, it was mainly a pastime of the rich, but the Frick's catalogs offer a more nuanced view: not all New York collectors were spectacularly wealthy, and not all spectacularly wealthy New Yorkers were great collectors. Some, like Cornelius Vanderbilt, followed the era's prevailing taste for contemporary European and American art (mostly landscapes and genre scenes), while others, such as H. O. Havemeyer and his wife Louisine, broke new ground by acquiring Impressionist paintings. Still others—Henry Clay Frick among them—consistently pursued works of the highest quality. *Documenting the Gilded Age* includes information on all of these collectors and many others.

An accompanying online exhibition highlights the research value of these catalogs. Using images from the digitized catalogs and other archival materials from the Frick, the exhibition presents profiles of Gilded Age collectors, the works that most interested them, and the display of art in their homes. It also examines how the public perception of Gilded Age collectors has shifted with time. Created using Google Open Gallery, the exhibition begins with a short video written and narrated by Dr. Inge Reist, Director of the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Art Reference Library. States Dr. Reist: "The richly interdisciplinary field of the history of collecting is very much on the ascendance, in part because it celebrates human activity. Studying this aspect of cultural history reminds us that the

desire to acquire beautiful objects is universal and the market forces that make possible the formation of great collections likewise have changed little over time. By availing researchers of online access to the treasure trove of the Frick Art Reference Library's collections, this project has enriched the field of the history of collecting and has made possible more precise documentation of great collections of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century New York."

For more information about this project, please visit frick.org/research/library/exhibitions or contact the project administrator, Deborah Kempe (kempe@frick.org).

ABOUT THE FRICK COLLECTION & THE 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 garden and the amenities created since the founder's time in the 1930s contribute to the serenity of the visitor's experience. The Frick Collection also is renowned for its small, focused exhibitions and for its highly regarded concert series and dynamic education program.

Adjoining The Frick Collection is the Frick Art Reference Library, founded more than ninety years ago by Henry Clay Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick. Housed in a landmarked building at 10 E. 71st Street, the Library is one of the world's leading institutions for research in the fields of art history and collecting. More than a quarter of its specialist book stock is not held by any other library. It includes extensive archives and a photo archive that make it an important resource for provenance research. Its catalog, finding aids, and many full-text documents and images are available online at <http://arcade.nyarc.org>. The Library also supports the Center for the History of Collecting, which organizes symposia and awards fellowships. The Frick Art Reference Library is open to the public free of charge.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: 212.288.0700

Web site: www.frick.org

Building project: www.frickfuture.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

App: frick.org/app

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue

Museum Hours: open six days a week: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day

Admission: \$22; senior citizens \$17; students \$12; "pay what you wish" on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

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.

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, Associate Director of Media Relations & Marketing

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