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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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THE FRICK COLLECTION BRINGS TO THE U.S. FOR THE FIRST TIME A SELECTION OF REMARKABLE BRONZES FROM THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM, CAMBRIDGE

February 15, 2005, through April 24, 2005

The Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge University possesses one of the finest collections of Renaissance and Baroque bronzes in Great Britain, and this February a group of thirty-six of them will be seen for the first time



Massimiliano Soldani Benzi (1656-1740)
Leda and the Swan
Italian, Florence, c. 1717, finished by June 25, 1717
Bronze, h. 34.5 cm; l. 30.5 cm; w. 15 cm
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

together in America in a presentation at New York's Frick Collection.

Dating from the turn of the sixteenth century to the early years of the eighteenth century—the period that saw the flowering of the bronze statuette as an independent art form—the sculptures are remarkable for their exquisite beauty and refinement. Many of the works in the exhibition are from the collection bequeathed to the Fitzwilliam Museum by the sister of Lieutenant Colonel Mildmay Thomas Boscawen, an explorer, naturalist, and botanist, who owned large plantations in East Africa. Included are masterpieces by such renowned Italian Renaissance and Baroque sculptors as Vincenzo Grandi and Alessandro Algardi, as well as outstanding bronzes by

Netherlandish, German, and French masters, which are rare among the Frick's predominantly Italian holdings. ***Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes from the***

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, seen in conjunction with the Frick's permanent collection, will provide visitors with a rare opportunity to explore the depth and range of European bronze sculpture. Presentation of the exhibition in New York is made possible, in part, through the generous support of Peter and Sofia Blanchard, Lawrence and Julie Salander, and The Helen Clay Frick Foundation, with additional support from the Fellows of The Frick Collection. It is being coordinated for the Frick by its Associate Curator Denise Allen and is accompanied by a catalogue and public lecture.

Comments by Director Anne L. Poulet, “This presentation is the third in a series of remarkable exhibitions at the Frick highlighting the bronze statuette, beginning with the 2003 exploration of the oeuvre of Willem van Tetrode, followed in 2004 with the unveiling of the distinguished Quentin collection. With each, we hope to have encouraged the general and scholarly public to take a renewed look at an art form that inspired the most talented Renaissance and Baroque sculptors. Furthermore, given that our own bronzes—on view throughout the Frick mansion—offer a sense of Henry Clay Frick’s personal taste, we are particularly pleased to present the Fitzwilliam works assembled by Colonel Boscawen as yet another compelling chapter in the collecting history of the medium.”

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE PASSION OF A COLLECTOR

Lieutenant Colonel Boscawen (1892–1958), a younger son of the 7th Viscount Falmouth, was educated at Eton and then Trinity College, Cambridge. After distinguishing himself in the First World War, he moved to Tanganyika and ran a successful business producing sisal hemp near Moa. A renowned explorer, naturalist, and botanist, Boscawen became an avid collector of sculpture, favoring bronze over any other medium because of its resilience to the African climate. His real love was medals, plaquettes and statuettes from the Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods, which he acquired from the London art market through the agency of trusted dealers who sometimes sent bronzes to Africa for Boscawen’s approval. The surviving correspondence reveals Boscawen to have been a most discerning collector, whose exacting tastes earned him a reputation as a connoisseur. Because he was desirous of having nothing but the best, he constantly refined his collection.

Self-effacing to a fault and very reticent, Boscawen has remained an obscure figure until recently, when a significant portion of his collection of bronzes, and several other works of art, entered the permanent collections of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Now, thanks to the rediscovery of more than forty letters that Boscawen wrote to his dealers in London, a wealth of new information has emerged about his activities as a collector and, at long last, the full scope and scale of his remarkable collection may be appreciated.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FITZWILLIAM PRESENTATION

The Fitzwilliam’s *Perfume Burner, the Lid with a Funerary Genius* is an example of the exquisite functional bronzes produced by the uncle-nephew team of Vincenzo and Gian Girolamo Grandi, who worked in sixteenth-century Renaissance Padua and Trent. Such pieces were highly valued accoutrements to the studies of noble and humanist patrons. Although many examples—primarily



Vincenzo Grandi (c. 1493-c. 1578), and/or Gian Girolamo Grandi (1508-60)
Perfume Burner, the Lid with a Funerary Genius Italian, Padua or Trent, c. 1530-60
Bronze, h. 34.1 cm
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

candlesticks and bells—from the Grandi shop survive, very few can be attributed solely to the hand of these masters. The Fitzwilliam exhibition will reunite two of their greatest works, the *Perfume Burner* and The Frick Collection’s exquisite *Hand Bell*, which the bronze scholar Willem von Bode called, “the most beautiful bell in all the world.” Both bronzes are characterized by the extraordinary sharpness of their casting, which allows decorative elements such as swags, ribbons, and escutcheons to stand out in crisply syncopated rhythm. The *Perfume Burner* and *Hand Bell* represent pinnacles of luxurious artistry in bronze, a material praised in the Renaissance for its ability to withstand the ravages of time. Emphasizing that the human condition is otherwise, the Grandi crowned each bronze with a bittersweet reminder of life’s transience: the putto on the *Perfume Burner* is shown dousing life’s torch, while his counterpart on the *Hand Bell* is seated on a skull, visible only when viewing the bell from behind.



Alessandro Algardi, one of the greatest sculptors of the seventeenth-century Roman Baroque, was trained in the workshop of the painter Ludovico Caracci, which could account for the striking pictorialism of his sculptural inventions. He popularized a form of devotional relief that is composed on the scale of painting and shows the same mastery of perspective effects, but



Alessandro Algardi (1598-1654)
Relief: *The Rest on the Flight to Egypt*
Italian, Rome, second quarter of 17th century
Bronze, h. 29.3 cm
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

in the much more difficult medium of bronze. *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt* is one such example, exhibiting the mellifluous handling of form and glittering, meticulously chased surface detail characteristic of Algardi’s greatest compositions. At The Frick Collection it finds a fitting companion in the *Pietà*, a contemporary relief created for similar devotional purposes. In both works Algardi characteristically emphasized the humanity of his divine protagonists. In *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, Mary tenderly holds the Christ-



Alessandro Algardi (1598-1654), *Pietà*, mid-1630s, bronze relief, The Frick Collection

child’s hand; in the *Pietà*, she eloquently opens her arms in grief. Algardi’s sensitive rendering of human emotion allows his sculptures to transcend formal beauty to become works of compelling religious power.

Massimiliano Soldani Benzi's *Leda and the Swan* (front page) is one of the signature works from the Fitzwilliam collection, as well as one of the latest, having been cast around 1717. Soldani was Master of the Mint to the grand dukes of Tuscany, and in the early eighteenth century his small bronzes—often erotic in subject and always sensual in handling—were avidly collected by Europe's nobility. Today Soldani is acknowledged as one of the last great Italian masters of the bronze statuette. Elegantly composed groups such as the *Leda and the Swan* were the trademarks of his production. Their liquid, graceful modeling derives from Soldani's training under the Baroque followers of Gianlorenzo Bernini. Like most of Soldani's work, the *Leda* is composed to be seen from a single viewpoint, as if on a theatrical stage. The sculpture presents Ovid's tale of the god Jupiter, who disguised himself as a swan to seduce the mortal Leda. Soldani emphasized the lovers' ongoing rapture as it is sustained by sight and touch—two senses traditionally required for the complete delectation of bronze statuettes. Soldani's sophisticated union between the desires of his mythological lovers and the pleasures appreciated by devotees of small bronzes helps explain why his sculptures enjoyed such enormous popularity among the most rarified European clientele.

RELATED PRESENTATION DRAWN FROM THE FRICK'S HOLDINGS

On view concurrently with this exhibition is the presentation *Animals in Combat: Giovanni Francesco Susini's Lion Attacking a Horse and Leopard Attacking a Bull*, created to explore the history of two exquisite and rare bronzes given to the Collection recently by Walter A. and Vera Eberstadt. The bronzes will be shown in the Cabinet gallery along with contemporary prints, drawings, and books that illustrate combating animal groups, a theme popular among private collectors in the Renaissance.

CATALOGUE TO ACCOMPANY FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM EXHIBITION

The exhibition from the Fitzwilliam Museum is accompanied by a catalogue written by Victoria Avery, an internationally respected scholar affiliated with the Harvard University Center of Italian Renaissance Studies. It also contains an essay on bronze casting technique and technical reports on each of the bronzes by Jo Dillon, Conservator of Objects at the Fitzwilliam Museum. This publication (341 pages) is available as a clothbound edition for \$75.00 through the Museum Shop of The Frick Collection, the institution's Web site (www.frick.org), or by calling (212) 288-0700.



FREE PUBLIC LECTURE

Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2005, 6:00 pm
Speaker: Victoria Avery, Rush H. Kress Fellow at Villa I Tatti in Florence
(the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies)
Title: “**Lt. Col. Boscawen and His Collection of Bronzes**”

Many of the statuettes in this special exhibition from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, come from the remarkable collection of Colonel Boscawen. This lecture will examine Boscawen’s life and his exacting standards as a collector. There is no charge for this lecture; seating is limited.

About The Frick Collection

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 small, focused 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; 1pm to 6pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (1 to 6 pm) on Lincoln’s Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

Admission: \$12; senior citizens \$8; students \$5

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.

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 INFORM® 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, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing

Media Relations Phone: (212) 547-6866; General Phone: (212) 288-0700

Fax: (212) 628-4417

E-mail address: mediarelations@frick.org