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from
THE FRICK COLLECTION

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**BELLINI'S *ST. FRANCIS IN THE DESERT* TO BE JOINED
BY LOANS IN THE LIVING HALL
IN A TEMPORARY INSTALLATION OF DEVOTIONAL PANELS
BY FRA BARTOLOMMEO AND GAROFALO**

May 6 through July 20, 2014



Installation view of works from The Alana Foundation flanking the Frick's famed Bellini panel *St. Francis in the Desert*; photo: Michael Bodycomb

This spring and summer, the Frick's famed painting *St. Francis in the Desert* by Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430/35–1516) will be flanked by later Renaissance depictions of Saint Jerome in the wilderness by Baccio della Porta (1472–1517), called Fra Bartolommeo, and Benvenuto Tisi (1481–1559), called Garofalo. On loan from The Alana Collection, the two panels exemplify the tradition of small-scale devotional works that inspired Bellini's innovative, large-scale masterpiece. This presentation coincides with the exhibition from May 13 through July 20 of *The Poetry of Parmigianino's "Schiava Turca"*,

which relocates the Frick's Titians—*Portrait of a Man in a Red Cap* and *Pietro Aretino*—from their customary positions in the Living Hall on either side of the Bellini to the Oval Room where they will be part of a panorama of Renaissance portraits.

The paintings of Bellini, Fra Bartolommeo, and Garofalo reflect the masters' regional origins in Venice, Florence, and Ferrara. The three works offer distinct interpretations of the common theme of penitent saints encountering the divine within brilliantly rendered landscapes. The saints' varied actions and emotional states invite comparison between different kinds of visionary religious experiences. The exquisitely painted panels will also encourage consideration of landscape as a genre that owed its development during the Italian Renaissance to the creative mastery of the oil

technique. The Frick's Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator Xavier F. Salomon comments, "The temporary introduction of Fra Bartolommeo's and Garofalo's Saint Jerome panels into the Living Hall marks a departure for the Frick. This is the first time that loans to the museum have been incorporated into the installation of that room. This visually arresting display will provide Bellini's masterpiece with a relevant and unprecedented formal and thematic context."



Baccio della Porta, called Fra Bartolomeo (1472–1517), *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness*, 1490s, oil on panel, 17 3/4 x 11 inches, The Alana Collection

With these loans, visitors have the opportunity to compare two divergent, equally imaginative approaches to the depiction of Saint Jerome, one of the fathers of the church, during his years as a hermit in the wilderness. In his painting from the 1490s, Florentine master Fra Bartolommeo, shows the penitent saint with arms crossed over his chest, his head gently bent upwards in adoration of a diminutive crucifix. A nearby lion—one of the saint's traditional attributes—refers to an earlier episode in which Saint Jerome plucked a thorn from a lion's paw. The artist references Saint Jerome's ascetic lifestyle through the rustic cave dwelling in the background, yet he chooses to deemphasize the saint's physical deprivations: Jerome's thin body is draped in voluminous robes and the rock he holds—an implement of self-mortification—barely grazes his chest. Rather than focusing on physical expressions of devotion, Fra Bartolommeo depicts the saint's intellectual and spiritual connection to Christ. The light emanating from the upper left-hand corner of the composition, signifying an unseen divine force, delicately caresses the crucifix and falls upon Saint Jerome's contemplative face, providing visual evidence for the transcendent connection between the saint and Christ. In a similar manner to Bellini's earlier *St. Francis in the Desert* (of c. 1475-78), Fra Bartolommeo's painting features a luminous landscape blanketed in divine light, indicating a spiritual event that has touched upon all elements of the natural world. This connection between spiritual and natural realms finds particular expression in the crucifix upon which Saint Jerome gazes; the rough-hewn, wooden figure is painted almost as a natural outgrowth of the tree itself, and, indeed, leaf-covered branches appear to merge with Christ's lifeless body, perhaps alluding to regeneration. Throughout the rest of the landscape, one finds trees with slender trunks and spindly, upwardly bent limbs that echo the lines of Christ's crucified body.

The Ferrarese artist Garofalo also depicts Saint Jerome in a moment of spiritual reflection, yet within a very different context. His panel, painted about twenty years after Fra Bartolommeo's, shows Saint Jerome (translator of the bible into Latin) engaged in his studies, grasping a scroll and consulting two tomes. He pauses for a moment to gaze upon a crucifix, with a nearby skull and hourglass providing reminders of life's transience. Here, the saint finds enlightenment through his scholarly pursuits rather than complete immersion in nature. Instead of being incorporated into the surrounding landscape, Saint Jerome is distinctly separated from it; his cave dwelling is hedged in by elements of



Benvenuto Tisi, called Garofalo (1481–1559), *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness*, after 1510, oil on panel, 14 1/2 x 16 1/8 inches, The Alana Collection

civilization—such as a brick wall and an enormous, carefully carved monolith—and his own body is separated from the earth by a low plinth. Yet, it is again an intense, golden light—one that appears both natural and divine—that suffuses the figures of Christ and Saint Jerome and suggests a moment of deep religious experience.

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: 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: \$20; senior citizens \$15; students \$10; "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.
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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 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 Admission for the Permanent Collection: Please call 212.288.0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and all content is available online.

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

Media Relations Phone: 212.547.0710; E-mail address: mediarelations@frick.org