

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE FRICK COLLECTION

1 East 70th Street · New York, New York 10021

In response to greatly increased attendance and a growing demand for enlarged educational facilities, The Frick Collection, the celebrated art museum on Fifth Avenue between Seventieth and Seventy-first Streets, will open on March 1 a new addition situated directly to the east of the main building.

The addition will overlook a new garden, which, unlike most city gardens, has been designed especially for flowering plants.

The annex will provide visitors with services that were not anticipated when the former residence of industrialist Henry Clay Frick was first opened as a public gallery forty-two years ago. At that time only fifty people a day were admitted, and ticket reservations were required. In recent years as many as 1,500 persons have visited the galleries in a day, creating long waiting lines on the street and congestion in the entrance hall.

The annex will house on its main floor a panelled and marbled waiting room adjacent to the museum's Seventieth Street entrance, a modernized coat-room and an expanded sales and information room. On two underground levels, not open to the general public, will be a seminar room, a display case for a small selection of blue-and-white Oriental porcelains, storage space and a study room in which scholars will be able to examine the Collection's drawings and prints.

Designed to complement but not imitate the original structure, the addition owes its principal architectural inspiration to the Grand Trianon at Versailles, built in 1687-88 from plans by Jules-Hardouin Mansart. The pavilion's one-story elevation, its tall arched windows alternating with slim Ionic pilasters, its platform of three low steps and details of its interior are all borrowed from Mansart.

The new garden will contain a large rectangular pool for tropical water lilies surrounded by four beds of flowering plants and asymmetrically spaced flowering trees. The garden, which will be visible to passers-by on Seventieth Street through an ornamental iron fence, balances the planted terrace that runs along the main building's Fifth Avenue facade.

The architect for the new wing was Harry van Dyke, working in association with John Barrington Bayley and G. Frederick Poehler. Mr. van Dyke is responsible for extensive restoration work on landmark structures in the New York area, and Mr. Bayley has been a leader in the preservation of old buildings.

The garden was laid out by the English landscape architect Russell Page, who is currently working on plans for a garden that will cover the area formerly occupied by Les Halles, the old produce market of Paris.

In designing the new wing and garden, considerable attention was paid to harmonizing them with the main building in terms of scale, materials, decoration and color.

The limestone for the pavilion's exterior and for the garden walls came from the same Indiana quarries as did that used in the original building and in the additions made to it when the residence was converted into a museum in the early 1930s.

The garden walls incorporate carved stone reliefs taken from the east wall of the original house at the time of the conversion, and the iron gates that once stood at the entrance drive to the house have been re-erected in the front of the garden, flanked by a wrought iron fence made to match the earlier fence around the main building. *by*

To further coordinate the old and new structures, the exposed upper east wall of the main building was finished with a limestone veneer, including a balustrade and blank windows that follow the design of the upper stories of the earlier Seventieth Street facade. The peaked roof over the exposed wall was canted to match the dominant roof lines of the main building.

A staggered row of Bradford pear trees and shrubs has been set in an elevated planting box installed behind the garden's north wall in order to screen the rear wall of the Frick Art Reference Library, which rises above it on Seventy-first Street.

The cost of the 16,468 square feet of new and converted space will be approximately \$2,110,000, or slightly over \$128 a square foot. The anticipated cost of the entire construction project, including the addition, the garden site, renovation of the east wall and roof and a new air conditioning system for the Collection and the Art Reference Library, is \$2,850,000.

Access from the existing building to the new wing was provided by opening two of the three large blind arches that had earlier formed the east wall of the entrance hall, thereby also significantly improving the flow of light and the sense of space in what had been a dark and confined foyer.

From the entrance hall visitors will pass through the first archway at their right into the vaulted waiting room, with its elaborate moldings, large hanging lanterns, parquet floor trimmed with Hansel Gray and Rosso Merlino marbles and French doors facing onto the garden.

At the near end of this room is a new coat-check desk, and at the far end stands a garden vase by Jean-Louis Lemoyne. At the center of the room is a second archway which leads back into the entrance hall, past the new sales and information room with its expanded display area. Storage space for the

sales room has been built behind it and on an overhead mezzanine, where an office also has been installed.

The Collection's greenroom, located between the new waiting room and the lecture hall, which it services when concerts are presented, has been more than doubled in size.

A central staircase leads from the main floor down to the new seminar room, which, with its projection equipment and seating facilities, provides the Collection for the first time with suitable space in which student and institutional groups can meet with staff members to study the museum's art works and related matters.

A connecting hall, where the blue-and-white porcelains will be displayed, leads to the room in which drawings and prints will be stored and made available for study, as in the past, to scholars by appointment. A pantry off the connecting hall permits the Collection to open this floor to small receptions.

The subbasement of the new wing will be used for storage. To the east of this level, under the garden, is a new mechanical equipment room servicing the addition and some of the Collection's present engineering facilities.

Apart from the opening of the entrance hall arches, no major architectural alterations have been made to the interior of the main building. The galleries are totally unchanged.

The general contractor for the construction project was H.M. Hughes Co., Inc., of New York. Structural engineers were Purdy & Henderson; heating, ventilation and air conditioning engineers were Syska & Hennessy and construction consultants were Richard J. Nolan and Richard J. Olds. The iron fence was fabricated by P.A. Fiebiger, Inc., who also renovated the gates.

After more than 30 years of consideration the decision to construct the addition was made by the Collection's Board of Trustees in 1973, largely in response to the museum's increased attendance.

The original residence had been built for Mr. Frick in 1913-14 from plans by Thomas Hastings of the firm of Carrère and Hastings, which had previously designed the main branch of the New York Public Library, also located on Fifth Avenue. Hastings' plan for the Frick building reflected Louis XVI domestic architecture and the work of the leading Beaux-Arts exponent Charles Garnier.

After Mr. Frick's death in 1919 his family continued to occupy the house until his widow died in 1931. In his will, Mr. Frick bequeathed the house, with the works of art he had acquired over a period of forty years, to a Board of Trustees, empowering them to make The Frick Collection a public gallery and a center for the study of art and related subjects. Alterations and additions to convert the building into a museum were made during the early 1930s by John Russell Pope.

In 1940 the Trustees purchased the land and building at 9 East Seventieth Street, and the following year they razed the building in order to construct a bombproof underground vault in which the collection was sheltered during World War II. At the same time the Trustees began negotiations to acquire the intervening properties at Nos. 5 and 7, having by then determined that the aims envisioned by Mr. Frick in his bequest could not be adequately realized unless the facilities were enlarged.

In 1946, 7 East Seventieth Street was purchased, and studies were made to determine if the properties at Nos. 7 and 9 could be connected to the Collection building and reconstructed to satisfy some of the additional space

demands. But architects advised against such steps until No. 5 could be incorporated in the plans. The Trustees then authorized an annual set-aside fund for eventual building construction. After an unsuccessful experiment in renting No. 7, it was decided in 1953 to level it and to redesign the underground area to connect with the other Collection properties, thereby providing expanded storage and workroom facilities.

In 1961 the Trustees established another annual set-aside fund toward the future purchase of 5 East Seventieth, and during the 1960s a series of plans was drawn for a new service wing adjoining the main Collection building. When No. 5 finally was acquired in 1972, after the death of George Widener, further studies were undertaken to determine whether the Widener House could be remodelled to provide quarters for the most urgently needed service areas. However, the design and condition of the house and the physical obstacles to linking the two buildings rendered the project unfeasible. The Widener house was demolished the following year.

At this stage it was planned to install a temporary garden on lots Nos. 5, 7 and 9 and to delay for a decade construction of a large wing on the site. Plans for this treatment were approved on July 6, 1973, by the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission. However, because of the high estimates received on the cost of the temporary garden, it was decided instead to reduce the size of the projected wing and to erect a small one-story pavilion and a permanent garden. These revised plans were accepted by the Landmarks Commission on May 23, 1974, and construction began in May of 1975.

The Frick Collection is open from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. on Sundays.

Background on the Architects

Harry van Dyke, a graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute who is registered as an architect in New York, New Jersey and California, has designed buildings throughout the world. Mr. van Dyke is a corporate member of the American Institute of Architects, a member of the New York State Associations of Architects and a life member of the Historical Society of Columbia County, New York, where he also maintains an office.

John Barrington Bayley holds degrees from Harvard and did architectural work in Italy following World War II. In 1970-72 he worked for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Mr. Bayley was a founder of Classical America and is a member of the Municipal Art Society, the Victorian Society in America, the Society of Architectural Historians and the Preservation Society of Newport County.

G. Frederick Poehler, a graduate of the Yale University School of Architecture, retired in 1972 from the firm of Alfred Easton Poor. During his career he has worked on such buildings as residential colleges at Yale and the James Madison Memorial Library, of Congress.

Russell Page's career spans more than five decades. He received the Order of the British Empire for the Festival Gardens at Battersea in 1951 and has worked extensively in France redesigning gardens surrounding historic buildings.

For additional information or photographs, please contact the Director's office of The Frick Collection (212) 288-0700.