

NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Norton Simon Museum Presents Memling's 'Portrait of a Man' on Loan from The Frick Collection as Part of an Art Exchange Program

On View January 27–April 30, 2012

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum is pleased to announce a special installation of Hans Memling's "Portrait of a Man," on loan from The Frick Collection in New York. Painted sometime in the 1470s, during the peak of the Bruges-based artist's portrait commissions, this handsome painting is a prime example of Memling's renowned style. This loan is part of an exchange program between The Frick Collection and the Norton Simon foundations that brought Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's stunning "Comtesse d'Haussonville" to the Norton Simon Museum in the fall of 2009. The Memling portrait, acquired in 1968, is a highlight of the Frick's northern paintings collection, and its presentation at the Norton Simon marks the painting's first visit to California.



Says Museum President Walter Timoshuk, "We are delighted to welcome this striking portrait by Hans Memling to California and the Norton Simon Museum. What is more, we are pleased to continue this loan exchange program with the remarkable Frick Collection in New York, which was a particular favorite of Mr. Simon's."

Hans Memling
(Netherlandish, c. 1430–1494)
'Portrait of a Man,' c. 1470–75
Oil on oak panel
13-1/8 x 9-1/8 in. (33.5 x 23.2 cm)
The Frick Collection, New York
Photo: Michael Bodycomb

Located on Fifth Avenue, The Frick Collection is housed in the former mansion of industrialist Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919) and is home to an internationally celebrated collection of Western fine and decorative arts, with works by Bellini, Fragonard, Gainsborough, Goya, Holbein, Ingres, Manet, Monet, Rembrandt, Renoir, Titian, Turner, Velázquez, Vermeer, Whistler, and others. Comments Colin B. Bailey, the Frick's Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator, "We are delighted that the Norton Simon selected

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Memling's "Portrait of a Man" to be the second Frick picture in the exchange program that means so much to both our institutions. It is a tour de force of early Netherlandish painting—remarkable in its truthfulness and humanity, and in an extraordinary state of conservation that allows the viewer to see practically every brushstroke. The identity of this sympathetic sitter, who holds the cornette or strap of his hat in his right hand, still remains to be discovered. Might the tiny steeple in the far left background and the impressive tower in the landscape at right offer some clue to his origins? Despite our best efforts, this is a work that has yet to reveal all its secrets."

Memling's "Portrait of a Man" will be installed in the Museum's Renaissance gallery, next to its own Memling painting, "Christ Giving His Blessing," 1478, from January 27 through April 30, 2012. During the painting's three-month presentation, the Museum is organizing a series of events, including lectures, tours and family programs. The installation is organized by Carol Togneri, Chief Curator of the Norton Simon Museum.

About Hans Memling

Hans Memling's brilliance as one of the most formative early Netherlandish painters is clearly evident in The Frick Collection's generous loan of their "Portrait of a Man." The remarkable quantity of Memling's existing portraits—in all about 50 of the 100 or so panels that have been attributed to his hand or his workshop—testify to the artist's popularity and renown in his own lifetime. All of these portraits were probably painted after his arrival in Bruges, in modern-day Belgium, in 1465 from his German birthplace in Seligenstadt. They demonstrate his awareness of a long line of his counterparts such as Robert Campin, Jan van Eyck, Petrus Christus and Gerard David, but above all they reveal his indebtedness to Rogier van der Weyden, with whom he assuredly trained in Brussels after his arrival in Flanders from the middle Rhine. After Rogier's death in 1464, Memling made his way to the thriving city of Bruges, where he would buy his citizenship, marry and have three children, and paint for the remainder of his life.

In the stable economic and political climate of the 1460s and 1470s, Bruges was a flourishing center of commerce, and the city was filled with ranks of successful locals and foreigners alike. The Frick's portrait, dated to ca. 1470–75, is likely a record of one of these prosperous bankers or merchants that were anxious to have their likenesses immortalized by Memling, who had already achieved wide fame and fruitful private commissions in his adoptive city. Given the panel's Northern Italian provenance, it has been suggested that the sitter was from Italy or a northern locale, but the identity of this dark-eyed, determined individual remains unknown. Other portraits by Memling reveal clues to the identity of his sitters: some hold attributes such as a letter, coin or ring, and in a few cases their ages or names are inscribed. Here, however, the Frick's anonymous sitter grasps the strap of his hat and gazes confidently at the object of his attention from inside his fictive frame. The landscape holds no distinct hints of his origin either, although scholars have commented on the fascination of Italian clients for northern landscape painting and their willingness to pay a higher price to have such a background painted for their own portraits. While Memling was not the

first northerner to place his figures, both sacred and profane, in an outdoor setting, the export of his paintings to other countries, especially Italy, would create an indelible mark on portrait painting from that point forward. Works such as the Frick's "Portrait of a Man" would be admired and emulated by Italian artists who were seminal in their own right: Botticelli, Pietro Perugino, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci would all paint signature works that suggest their familiarity with Memling's common patterns and unique positioning of his figures in lush landscapes.

About the Art Exchange Program

In 2007, the Norton Simon foundations entered a new phase in their history by forming an art exchange program with both the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and The Frick Collection in New York City. Works of art from the Norton Simon foundations are lent to both of these estimable institutions for special viewings and, in return, masterpieces from their collections make their way to the Norton Simon Museum. The exchange is an opportunity to promote the Norton Simon collections to a much wider audience while simultaneously providing Southern California audiences the chance to view some of the world's most significant and visually compelling paintings.

Loans to the National Gallery of Art have included Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Boy," 1655–60, and Manet's "The Ragpicker," c. 1865–70, (summer 2007 and 2009 respectively). Loans to The Frick Collection have included Jacopo Bassano's "Flight into Egypt," c. 1544–45; Peter Paul Rubens's "Holy Women at the Sepulchre," c. 1611–14; Guercino's "Aldrovandi Dog," c. 1625; Francisco de Zurbarán's "Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose," 1633; and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's "Birth of St. John the Baptist," c. 1655, which were installed in a special presentation titled *Masterpieces of European Art From the Norton Simon Museum* (winter 2009).

Loans to the Norton Simon Museum have included Johannes Vermeer's "A Lady Writing," c. 1665 (fall 2008) and Raphael's "The Small Cowper Madonna," c. 1505 (fall 2010) from the National Gallery of Art, and Ingres's "Comtesse d'Haussonville," dated 1845 from The Frick Collection (fall 2009).

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open from noon to 6 p.m. every day except Tuesday and noon to 9 p.m. on Friday. **Admission:** General admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for seniors (**senior admission will be increased to \$7 on Jan. 1, 2012**). Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 6 to 9 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.