



Fragonard's masterpiece *The Swing* goes back on display after conservation

- *Les hasards heureux de l'escarpolette (The Swing)* c.1767 - 1768 is Jean-Honoré Fragonard's (1732-1806) most famous work, and one of the most iconic images in French art.
- The painting has undergone technical analysis for the first time alongside conservation treatment.
- The work was made possible thanks to a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.
- The Wallace has the largest collection of Fragonard paintings in Europe outside of France (eight in total), spanning his entire career.
- *The Swing* goes back on display in November in a relit gallery. For the first time it will hang alongside all the other Fragonard paintings in the museum.
- Throughout November and December, the Collection is hosting a series of special events linked to Fragonard and *The Swing*.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard's painting, *The Swing*, is the most iconic painting of the entire Rococo movement and one of the Wallace Collection's most famous works of art.

It has been admired for centuries for its romantic composition, skilful brushwork, and masterly use of colour. References to *The Swing* can be found in literature, contemporary art, design and cinema. It is sought out and admired by thousands of visitors to the museum each year.

Despite its fame, relatively little is known about the painting. The circumstances of its commission are vague, with Fragonard opting to undertake a painting that other 'academic' painters had refused on account of its scandalous theme. Fragonard's methods in building the composition are also unclear. In addition to this, the paint surface was previously obscured by yellowed varnish and old retouching had become visible.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project, throughout the summer of 2021 *The Swing* underwent intricate, sensitive highly skilled conservation and technical analysis for the first time.

Uniquely, the conservation treatment has taken place in house at the Wallace Collection, with one of its conservation studios temporarily transformed especially for the purpose. The work has been undertaken by Martin Wyld, former Head of Conservation at the National Gallery, where he worked for more than 40 years restoring works by artists such as Leonardo and Velazquez.

Investigations have shed light on the mysteries surrounding *The Swing* and developed our understanding of Fragonard and his methods as an artist. The removal of the yellowed varnish has transformed the painting. The white lace of the young girl's dress is now crisp, the composition has taken on a new sense of depth, background details are now apparent, and the overall freshness and texture of the artist's paint surface has been restored. Little underdrawing or preparatory studies have been identified. Fragonard appears to have worked confidently and skilfully, directly on the canvas, to create *The Swing*, his finest masterpiece.

The painting is being reinstalled in the specially relit galleries in November 2021, alongside the other seven Fragonard works in the Wallace Collection, allowing visitors to see for the first time how the artist developed across his career.

The return of *The Swing* is accompanied by a special season of events, which encompasses free public talks with special guests, a focused study course, and a book signing. The Collection has documented the conservation process and commissioned an insightful film exploring Fragonard and *The Swing*'s influence.

Dr Xavier Bray, Director of the Wallace Collection, said: 'We have approached the conservation of Fragonard's masterpiece with great sensitivity and an acute awareness of our responsibility to the public to preserve this iconic painting. The results have been astonishing, and Fragonard's true genius has been revealed. I urge you to visit, look at *The Swing* afresh and fall in love with Fragonard again.'

Dr Yuriko Jackall, Head of Curatorial and Curator of French Paintings at the Wallace Collection, said: 'Fragonard is an elusive artist who has fascinated me throughout my career. He is so varied, unpredictable, and accomplished. He left us with remarkably little documentary evidence about his life and working methods, we have therefore sought answers in his work itself. Although more research remains to be done, I am excited about the impact that closer looking at the *The Swing* will have on the public and Fragonard scholarship generally.'

Andrea Sullivan, Head of International Environment, Social & Governance at Bank of America said: 'At Bank of America we believe in the power of the arts to help economies thrive, bring communities together and promote greater cultural understanding. We are delighted to support the conservation of this inimitable masterpiece, restoring it to its former glory, helping to ensure more people will enjoy it for many years to come.'

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE](#)

Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732 - 1806) *The Swing*, c.1767 - 1768 © Trustees of The Wallace Collection, London

FRAGONARD IN THE WALLACE COLLECTION

- *The Musical Contest*, c.1754 - 55
- *Le Petit Parc*, c.1762 - 1763
- *A Young Scholar*, c.1765 - 1775
- *The Swing*, 1767
- *The Souvenir*, c.1776 - 1778
- *'Say Please' (Dites donc s'il vous plait)*, c.1780
- *A Boy as a Pierrot*, c.1780

- *The Fountain of Love*, c.1785

Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732 – 1806) was born at Grasse, in the south of France. He trained in Paris with Chardin and then Boucher. In 1752 he won the Prix de Rome, and then entered the royal school of the *Élèves Protégés*, directed by Carle van Loo. He was at the French Academy in Rome from 1756 to 1761. After his return to France, Fragonard was initially successful as a painter of decorative schemes. He received a setback when his now-famous series, *The Progress of Love* of 1771 (New York, Frick Collection), commissioned by Madame du Barry, the last mistress of Louis XV, was refused in preference to classicising scenes by Marie-Joseph Vien. He paid a second visit to Italy in 1773-4, continuing on his return to paint landscapes, fanciful portraits and scenes of everyday life, as well as working as a book illustrator. From the mid-1780s his style, while retaining its dynamism, became more Neo-classical. Between 1793 and 1800 he was heavily involved in arts administration.

The Fragonard events season

Throughout November and December, The Wallace Collection will host a special season of events focusing on Fragonard, *The Swing*, and the French rococo period. A series of online evening talks sees distinguished contemporary artists, arts practitioners and specialists in conversation with curator Yuriko Jackall. Contributors include designer Sami Nouri, curator Valerie Steele and artist Catherine Yass, among others. In addition to this, a two-day evening course will be available for those who wish to examine Fragonard and *The Swing* in detail. Also scheduled are a talk and book signing with Dr Satish Padiyar (Honorary Research Fellow, The Courtauld Institute of Art), author of *Fragonard. Painting Out of Time* (Reaktion Books, 2020) and a public lecture by curator Yuriko Jackall who will describe the Fragonard project as a whole and present new material on *The Swing*. For a full list of events follow this link: <https://www.wallacecollection.org/the-swing/>

Bank of America Arts and Culture

The Bank of America Art Conservation Project is a key demonstration of Bank of America's arts support worldwide, and part of the company's environmental, social and governance commitment. Through the Art Conservation Project, programs like Museums on Us®, loaning exhibitions through the Art in Our Communities program, the Masterpiece Moment video series and sponsorships and grants, we support a wide range of both local and world-class organizations. Our programs are designed to have a positive impact on economies and societies throughout the world, and shine a light on diverse cultural traditions. Through steadfast and strategic support, we have become one of the world's leading corporate supporters of the arts. To learn more about our arts and culture support and programs, please visit bankofamerica.com/arts.

About the Wallace Collection

As one of Britain's preeminent cultural institutions, the Wallace Collection is home to one of the most significant ensembles of fine and decorative arts in the world. Highlights include oil paintings from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth centuries by artists such as Titian, Velazquez, Rubens and Van Dyck; princely arms and armour; and one of the finest collections of eighteenth-century French paintings and decorative arts. Visitors can also enjoy superb medieval and Renaissance objects, including Limoges enamel, maiolica, glass and bronzes. Displayed at Hertford House, former home to Sir Richard and Lady Wallace, this outstanding collection is displayed in a manner designed to evoke the lives and tastes of its founders, creating a special ambiance that remains an essential part of its charm. www.wallacecollection.org

The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London, W1U 3BN is open daily, 10.00-17.00.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES

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