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CONSUMING PASSION: FRAGONARD'S ALLEGORIES OF LOVE OPENS AT THE CLARK OCTOBER 28

First Exhibition Devoted to Fragonard's Late Allegorical Paintings

For Immediate Release

WILLIAMSTOWN, MA—This fall, the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute will host the exhibition *Consuming Passion: Fragonard's Allegories of Love*. Exploring mysterious and evocative allegories of love produced in the 1780s and 1790s by the artist Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806), this international loan exhibition features works from the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the Albertina in Vienna, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as well as from other museums and private collections. The exhibition has been organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, and will be on view at the Clark October 28, 2007, through January 21, 2008.



The Fountain of Love, about 1785,
by Jean-Honoré Fragonard
Oil on canvas, unframed 24 1/2 x 20 1/4 in.
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

“*Consuming Passion* marks the first significant exhibition in the United States of Fragonard’s works in 20 years,” said Richard Rand, senior curator at the Clark. “The exhibition presents one of the greatest and most prolific artists in the decades preceding the French Revolution from a new perspective, expanding the understanding of the art of this influential period.”

Best known as a painter of playful genre subjects, garden landscapes, and fantasy portraits, Fragonard in his later years embarked on a series of dramatic reflections on the subject of romantic love. Made largely from around 1775 until the end of the century, Fragonard’s later paintings and drawings personify the new ideas of all-encompassing romantic love that had emerged in the middle of the century – passionate abandon, endless love, the consummation of desire, and the loss of virginity – in the form of classically draped figures rushing toward fountains of love, placing roses on altars, or confessing their love before a statue of Cupid. These

works are characterized by a darker, more mysterious palette and a fascination with classical and literary themes. This change in Fragonard's art reflected the influence of the emerging Neoclassical style, but also anticipated the emotional and even irrational tendencies of the Romantic movement in the early nineteenth century.

The exhibition will be organized thematically into groupings of paintings, drawings, and other ephemera that depict particular allegories: *The Oath of Love*, *The Sacrifice of the Rose*, *The Invocation of Love*, and *The Fountain of Love*.

The exhibition also includes an introductory section, "Fragonard Between Fact and Fantasy," which will feature works by the French artist from the Clark's collection (including the great "fantasy portrait," *The Warrior*), in addition to several loans. A complementary exhibition, entitled *Printed Love*, will contextualize the works through a display of engravings, etchings, and illustrated books from the extraordinary collection of rare books in the Clark's library.

A fully illustrated companion publication, *Fragonard's Allegories of Love*, written by Fragonard scholar Andrei Molotiu, will be published by the J. Paul Getty Museum. The Clark is planning a wide array of public programs related to the exhibition.

Following its presentation at the Clark, the exhibition will be on view at the Getty from February 12 to May 4, 2008.

The Clark

Set amidst 140 bucolic acres in the picturesque Berkshires, the Clark is one of the few major art museums in the United States that also serves as a leading international center for research and scholarship. In addition to its extraordinary collections, the Clark organizes groundbreaking special exhibitions that advance new scholarship and presents an array of public and educational programs. The Clark's research and academic programs include an international fellowship program and regular conferences, symposia, and colloquia. Its programs draw university and museum professionals from around the world. The Clark, together with Williams College, sponsors one of the nation's leading master's programs in art history and encompasses one of the most comprehensive art history libraries in the world.

In 2008, the Clark will open the Stone Hill Center, the first phase of its expansion and campus enhancement project. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando, the wood and glass 32,000-square-foot building will house new intimately scaled galleries, a meeting and studio art classroom, an outdoor café, and the Williamstown Art Conservation Center (WACC).

The Berkshires, a region of rolling hills in western Massachusetts, has been a haven for cultural activity since the first half of the 19th century. The Berkshires are home to a wealth of cultural institutions that in addition to the Clark include: Tanglewood, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, MASS MoCA, the Norman Rockwell Museum, Williams College Museum of Art, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival, among many others. For more information, visit www.clarkart.edu or call 413-458-2303.