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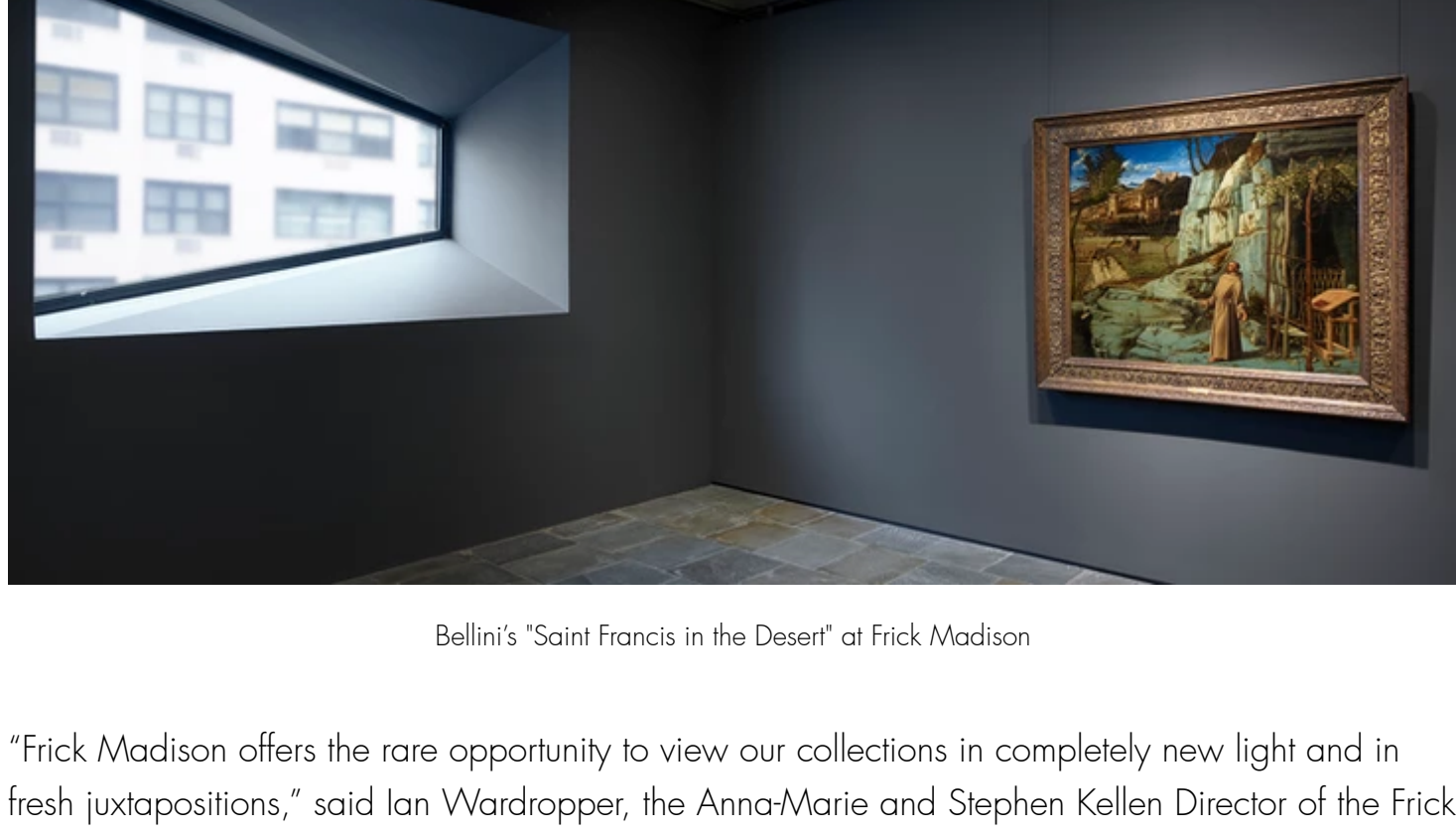
The Old Masters Find a Temporary Brutalist Home at Frick Madison

Updated: Jul 7

By Bart Boehlert
Photos by [Joseph Coscia, Jr.](#), Courtesy of the Frick Collection

A favorite pastime of New Yorkers has long been spending an afternoon in the Gilded splendor of the [Frick Collection](#) located on Fifth Avenue at 70th Street, in the former mansion home of Henry Clay Frick. There, visitors enjoy viewing Old Master paintings in a lavish domestic setting complete with sumptuous 18th-century furniture, carpets, decorative arts, and objects that Mr. Frick collected. That mansion is now closed and undergoing a two-year-long renovation and expansion designed by the firm [Seldorf Architects](#).

In a stunning quick change, the refined masterpieces of the Frick Collection have moved five blocks north into the former [Whitney Museum](#) at Madison Avenue and East 75th Street, finding themselves temporarily housed in a modern, Brutalist Bauhaus building of rugged concrete designed by Marcel Breuer.



Bellini's "Saint Francis in the Desert" at Frick Madison

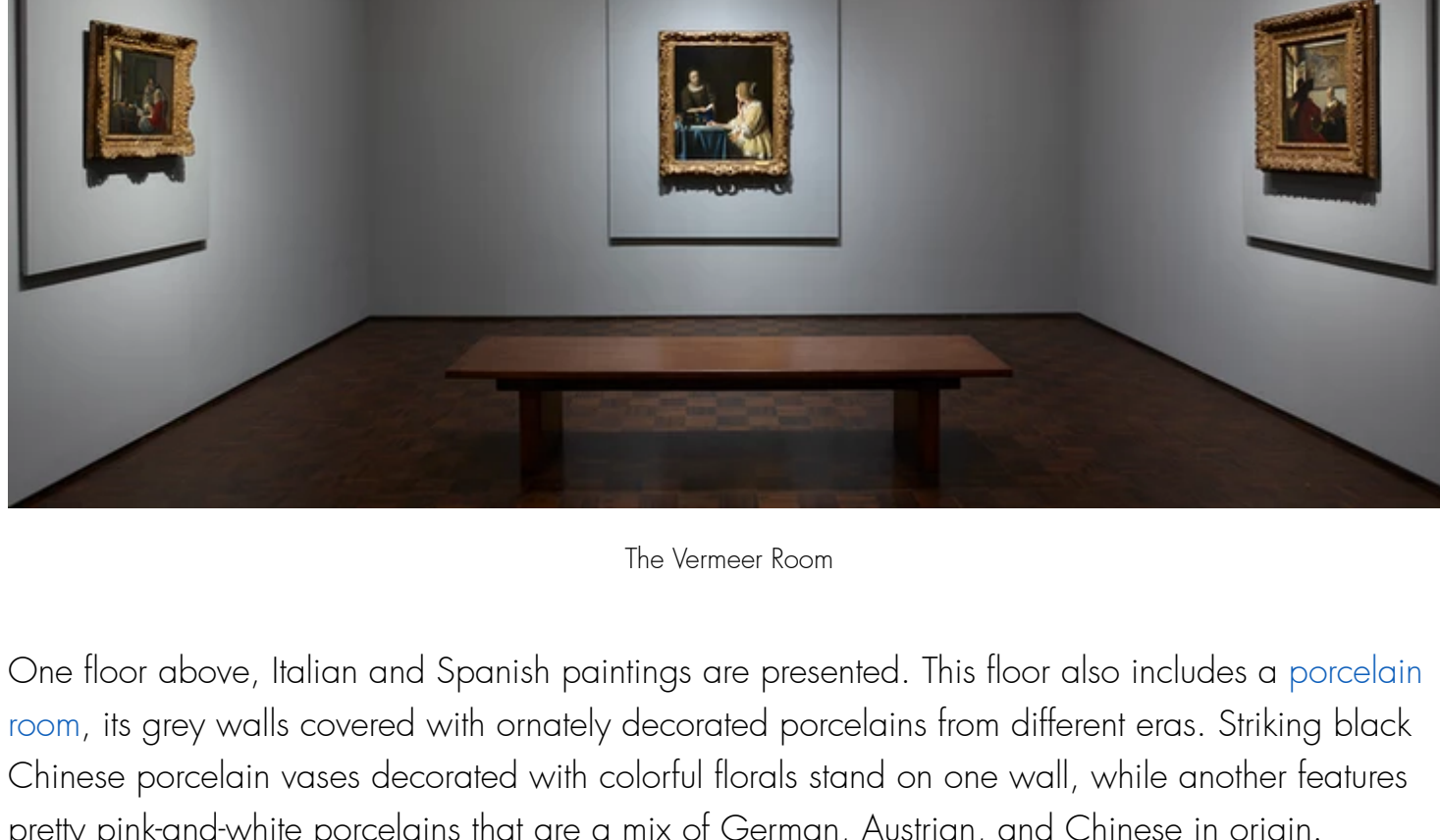
"Frick Madison offers the rare opportunity to view our collections in completely new light and in fresh juxtapositions," said Ian Wardropper, the Anna-Marie and Stephen Kellen Director of the Frick Collection at the press preview.

Now displayed within the cubic building's minimal, spartan setting are paintings, refined sculptures, bronzes, clocks, and rugs. The sharp edges of grey walls contrast with the richness of the artworks, and, as at the Frick, there are no textual wall labels, so visitors download an app for information about each piece.



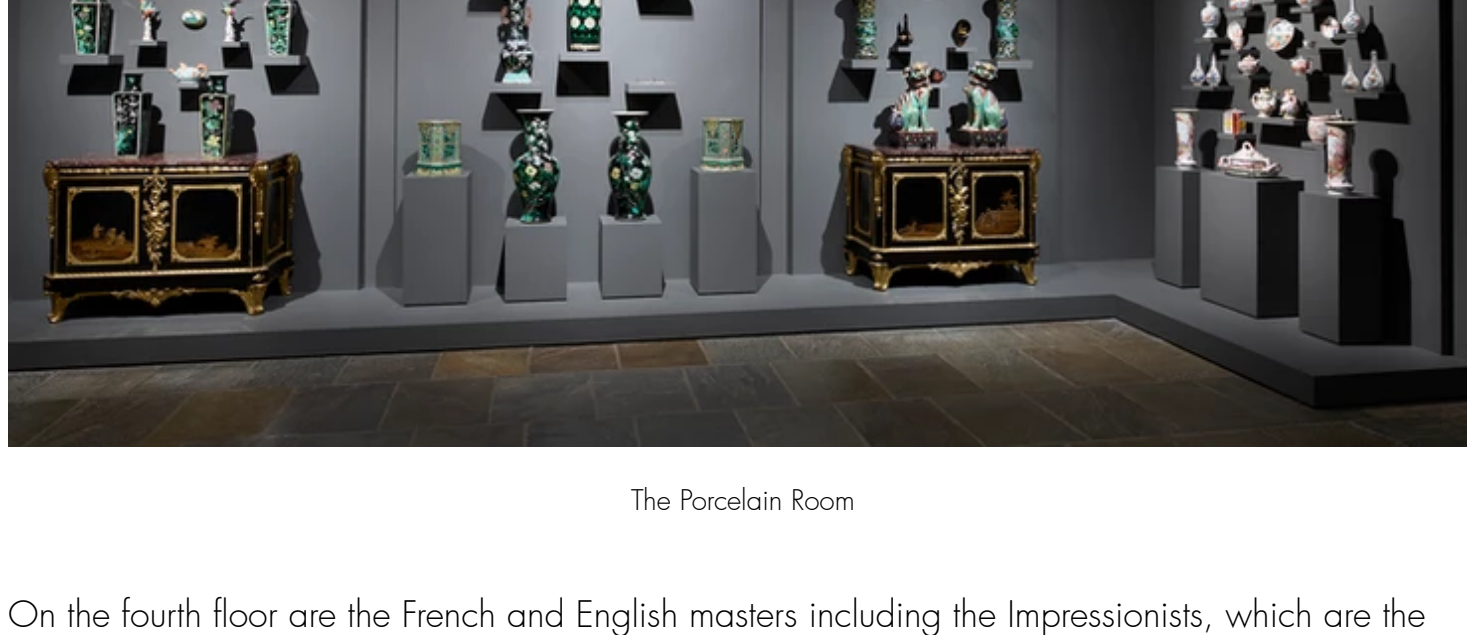
Exterior of Frick Madison

The collection is organized geographically, with Northern European painting displayed on the second floor. A rare treat is a small room where [three luminous Vermeers](#) depicting quiet domestic life hang on three facing walls, seemingly reflecting each other.



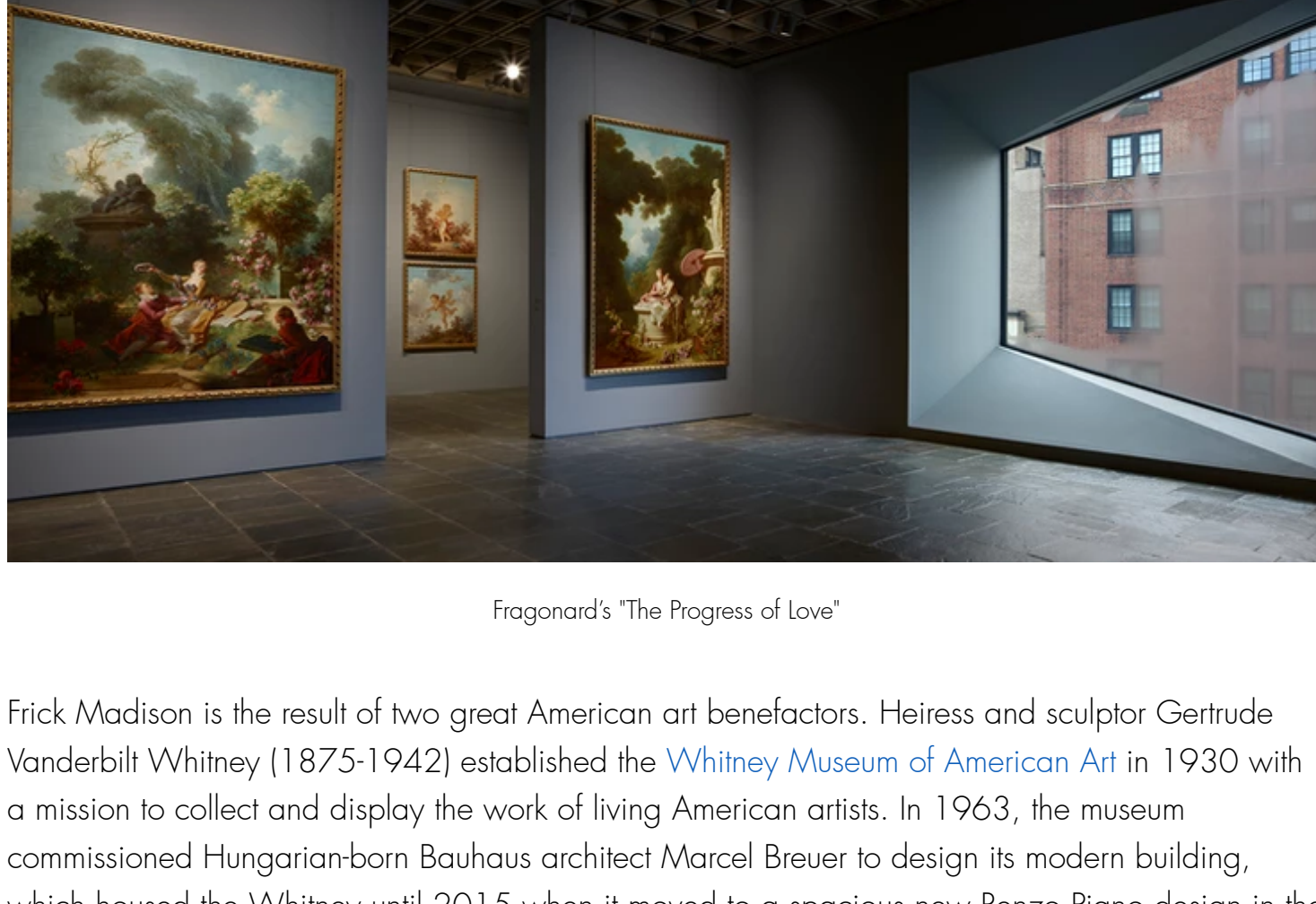
The Vermeer Room

One floor above, Italian and Spanish paintings are presented. This floor also includes a [porcelain room](#), its grey walls covered with ornately decorated porcelains from different eras. Striking black Chinese porcelain vases decorated with colorful florals stand on one wall, while another features pretty pink-and-white porcelains that are a mix of German, Austrian, and Chinese in origin.



The Porcelain Room

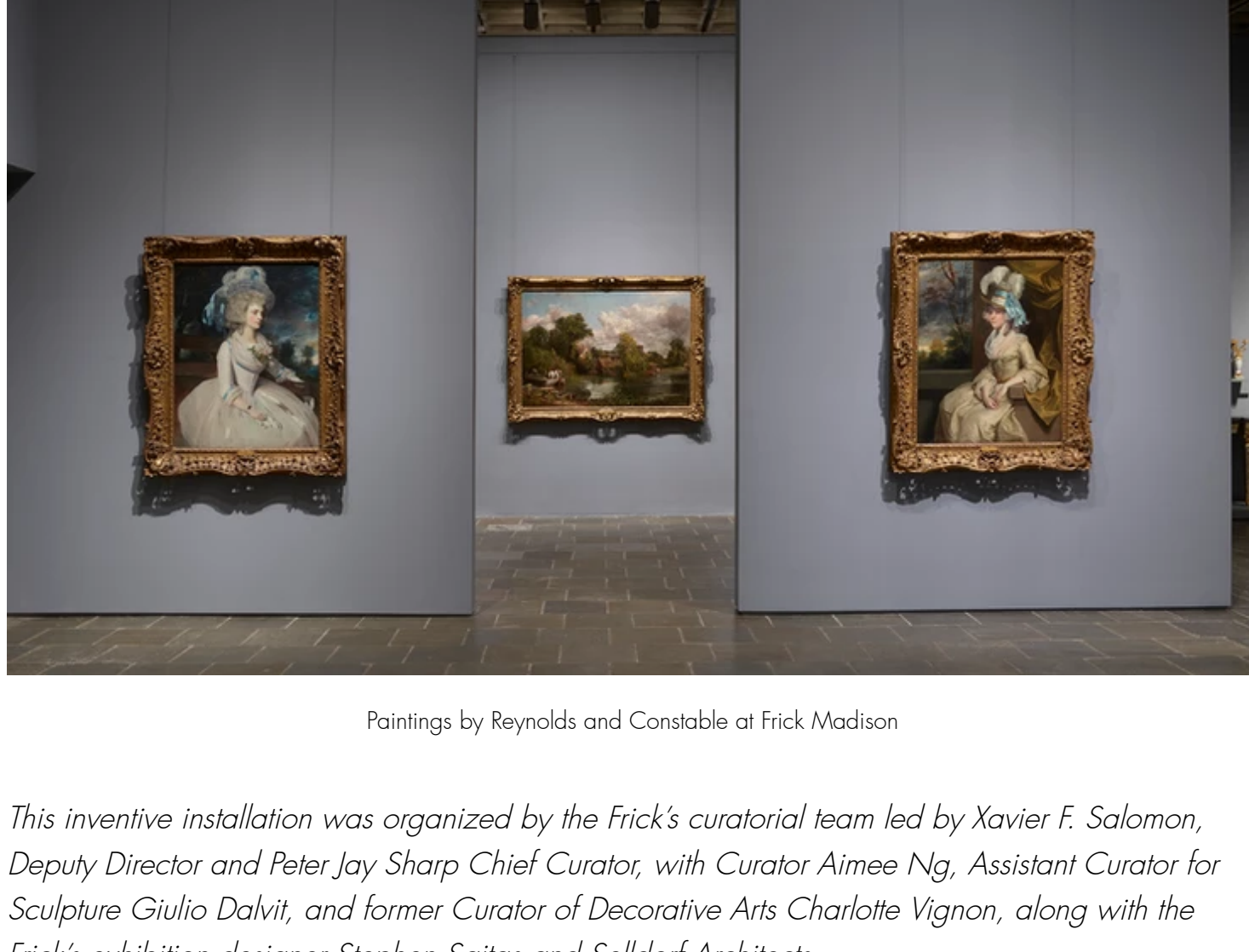
On the fourth floor are the French and English masters including the Impressionists, which are the most modern works in the Frick Collection. Shown for the first time all together are the 14 paintings which make up [The Progress of Love series by Fragonard](#), four of which were commissioned by Madame du Barry, the last mistress of King Louis XV. In a striking contrast, some of these frothily rosy pictures are hung next to a stark, modern, trapezoidal Breuer window that reveals the brick buildings of Madison Avenue across the street.



Fragonard's "The Progress of Love"

Frick Madison is the result of two great American benefactors. Heiress and sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875-1942) established the [Whitney Museum of American Art](#) in 1930 with a mission to collect and display the work of living American artists. In 1963, the museum commissioned Hungarian-born Bauhaus architect Marcel Breuer to design its modern building, which housed the Whitney until 2015 when it moved to a spacious new Renzo Piano design in the Meatpacking District. After that the building was briefly the site of a branch of the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) called Met Breuer.

Its subsequent vacancy now provides a temporary home for the collection of Henry Clay Frick, the Pennsylvania-born industrialist who assembled one of the great private art collections at the turn of the last century. He decreed that upon his death, his Carrère and Hastings-designed Beaux Arts mansion would be open to the public. As that building now undergoes renovation, Frick Madison offers the best of New York, marrying the old and the new.

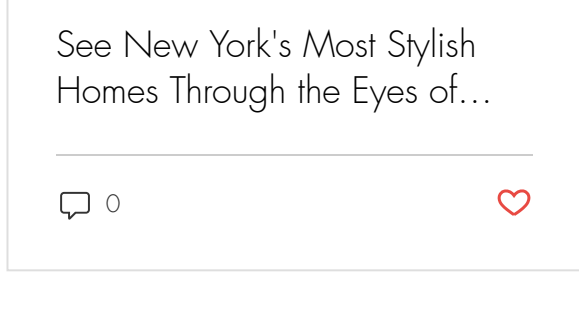


Paintings by Reynolds and Constable at Frick Madison

This inventive installation was organized by the Frick's curatorial team led by Xavier F. Salomon, Deputy Director and Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator, with Curator Aimee Ng, Assistant Curator for Sculpture Giulio Dalvit, and former Curator of Decorative Arts Charlotte Vignon, along with the Frick's exhibition designer Stephen Saitas and Seldorf Architects.

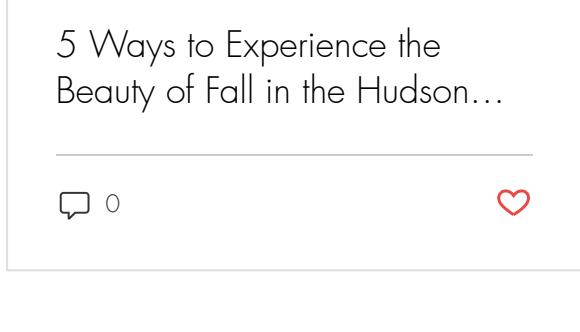
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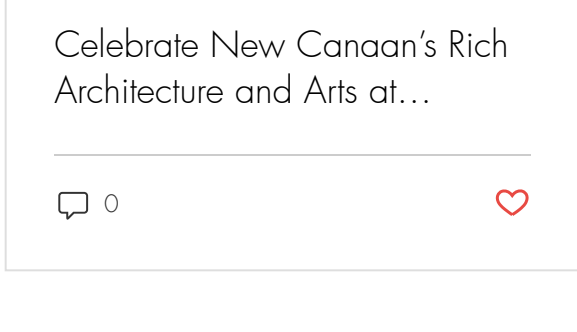
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