

Contact: Greg Langel
Media and Marketing Manager
412-371-0600 ext. 524
GLangel@TheFrickPittsburgh.org

For Immediate Release

BRETON MASTERPIECE RETURNS TO CLAYTON FOR LIMITED TIME

*1895 painting by Jules-Adolphe Breton on exhibition at the Frick
through March 28, 2010*



Jules-Adolphe Breton (French, 1827–1906). *The Last Gleanings*, 1895. Oil on canvas, 36 ½ x 55 inches.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.

PITTSBURGH, PA— Beginning October 20, 2009, *The Last Gleanings* by acclaimed 19th-century French painter Jules-Adolphe Breton (1827–1906) will be installed over the mantel in the dining room at Clayton, the restored home of the Henry Clay Frick family at the Frick Art & Historical Center in Pittsburgh's historic East End.

Thanks to a six-month loan from The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California, visitors to the Frick will have the opportunity to view the painting as it was displayed at Clayton during the years 1895–1903.

In addition to being visible on public tours, offered Tuesday through Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., visitors will have two opportunities in early November to view the work

– more –

during brief gallery talks (see below for detailed program information). In addition, beginning Sunday, January 10, 2010, the Frick will feature *The Last Gleanings* and focus on other works of art in a special tour of Clayton titled *Art and Culture in the Gilded Age*, which will be offered Tuesdays and Sundays at 12:30 p.m.

ABOUT THE WORK

Jules-Adolphe Breton was popular in Pittsburgh as he was elsewhere in the United States, and his works were displayed in the Carnegie Annuals of 1896, 1897 and 1898. Paintings by Breton formerly in local 19th-century collections remain in the collections of the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Duquesne Club. Breton's 1890 autobiography, *The Life of An Artist*, was quite popular and the Fricks owned a copy of the English language edition.

In the summer of 1895, Henry Clay Frick and his family traveled to Europe, where they met a number of artists. Frick, who was beginning what would become an enduring relationship with the dealers M. Knoedler and Co., went on a bit of a buying spree. That year 18 of his 25 art purchases were made through Knoedler.

Mr. Frick purchased *The Last Gleanings* on August 23, 1895. At \$14,000, it was the most expensive painting he had purchased up to that time. It's quite likely that Frick saw the work when he visited with Breton at the artist's studio in his hometown of Courrières in northern France. The painting also had been displayed that spring in the Salon of 1895, where *The New York Times* noted on April 28 that the painting was executed in the "master's best manner."

By 1895, the art-buying and artviewing public was well aware of Breton's "best manner." The artist had developed a reputation for peasant scenes, more idealized than those of Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), his older contemporary and a more famous painter of peasant life. Breton's canvases are, however, imbued with a deep sensitivity to the natural environment and an appreciation for atmospheric effects. Millet is famously said to have remarked that Breton only painted the pretty girls, the ones who left the village to get married.

Breton's pretty girls were, like those of other French academic artists who worked with similar subject matter, popular with American collectors around the turn of the 20th century. The idealized agrarian scenes of Breton, Julien Dupré, William-Adolphe Bouguereau, and others found welcome spaces on the walls of American industrialists where their works evoked nostalgia for a rapidly vanishing rural way of life. Sowing, gleaning and harvesting also have references to biblical themes and can be read as metaphors for the condition of humankind in general.

The Last Gleanings was hung in the dining room at Clayton, where it is visible in period photographs, and is recorded on the household inventory of 1903. After 1903, it no longer appeared on the Pittsburgh inventory. The work was likely moved to the Fricks' rented residence at 640 Fifth Avenue in New York, or perhaps spent time at their summer home in Massachusetts. A new frame was purchased for \$240 on October 23, 1905, and it

is likely that this was to suit the painting better in its new location, wherever that might have been. Frick often kept paintings on a trial basis, or later returned them to Knoedler for credit toward future purchases. Between 1890 and 1905, while Clayton was the Frick family's main residence, at least 54 works were exchanged or returned to dealers for credit as Frick's tastes changed or his collecting interests evolved. *The Last Gleanings* was returned to M. Knoedler and Co. on January 1, 1907 for \$25,000 towards the purchase of a Rembrandt self-portrait now in The Frick Collection, New York. Breton had died in July 1906, and one can speculate whether the artist's death had any impact on Frick's decision to trade the painting.

The current Frick exhibition of *The Last Gleanings* marks the third time the painting has traveled to Pittsburgh in its history. The painting was included in the 1997 Frick-organized exhibition *Collecting in the Gilded Age: Art Patronage in Pittsburgh, 1890–1910*.

EXHIBITION PROGRAMS

Following are details regarding the public exhibition-related programs offered by the Frick during the exhibition of Jules Breton's *The Last Gleanings* at Clayton.

Clayton Features: *The Last Gleanings*

Thursdays, November 5 and 12

2:00–2:15 p.m

Free and open to the public

Meet at the Clayton *porte cochère*

Formerly owned by Henry Clay Frick and on loan from The Huntington Library, Art Collection and Botanical Gardens, Jules-Adolphe Breton's *The Last Gleanings* comes home to Clayton for a brief time. This short gallery talk explores this painting's history and its place in Gilded Age collecting.

Tour of Clayton: *Culture in the Gilded Age*

Beginning Sunday, January 10, 2010

Tuesdays and Sundays at 12:30 p.m.

Beginning in January, 2010, the Frick will offer a special tour of Clayton highlighting the many paintings and prints installed in the historic mansion.

This tour addresses the culture of collecting in the Gilded Age and Henry Clay Frick's role as one of the premier collectors of his time. Through April 2010, this tour will include the *The Last Gleanings* by Jules Breton.

Tour participants will see Mr. Frick's earliest documented painting purchases and learn about how his tastes and skill as a collector evolved. Participants will also learn about other prominent Pittsburgh collectors.

Tour space is limited and reservations, which may be made by calling 412-371-0600, are required.

For additional information or images, please contact Greg Langel, Media and Marketing Manager, at 412-371-0600 ext. 524 or GLangel@TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

#

The Frick Art & Historical Center, a museum, historic site and cultural center, serves the public through preservation, presentation, and interpretation of the fine and decorative arts and historically significant artifacts for all residents of and visitors to Western Pennsylvania.