

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Sir Thomas More

Hans Holbein the Younger (German, 1497/1498–1543)

Date 1527

Medium Oil on oak panel

Dimensions 29 1/2 x 23 3/4 in. (74.9 x 60.3 cm)

Credit Line Henry Clay Frick Bequest

Accession Number 1912.1.77

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 10, Living Hall

Commentary Thomas More (1477/78–1535), humanist scholar, author, and statesman, served Henry VIII as diplomatic envoy and Privy Councillor prior to his election as speaker of the House of Commons in 1523. The chain More wears in this portrait is an emblem of service to the King, not of any specific office. In 1529 More succeeded Cardinal Wolsey as Lord Chancellor, but three years later he resigned that office over the issue of Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, and subsequently he refused to subscribe to the Act of Supremacy making the King head of the Church of England. For this he was convicted of high treason and beheaded. Venerated by the Catholic Church as a martyr, More was beatified in 1886 and canonized in 1935 on the four-hundredth anniversary of his death. Holbein's sympathy for the man whose guest he was upon first arriving in England is apparent in the Frick portrait. His brilliant rendering of the rich fabrics and adornments make this one of Holbein's best and most popular paintings. Various versions of the portrait exist, but this is undoubtedly the original. Source: *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History The London dealer Farrer. Henry Huth. Edward Huth. Knoedler. Frick, 1912. Source: *Paintings in The Frick Collection: American, British, Dutch, Flemish and German. Volume I*. New York: The Frick Collection, 1968.