

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Still Life with Plums

Jean-Siméon Chardin (French, 1699–1779)

Date ca. 1730

Medium Oil on canvas

Dimensions 17 3/4 × 19 3/4 in. (45.1 × 50.2 cm)

Credit Line Purchased by The Frick Collection, 1945

Accession Number 1945.1.152

Currently On View

Second Floor, Room 27, Boucher Anteroom

Commentary The only still life in The Frick Collection is a classic example painted by an undisputed master of the genre, probably quite early in his career. Shunning the lavish and complex productions of his Dutch and Flemish predecessors, Chardin simplified the number and type of ingredients in his still lifes, then arranged these familiar household objects in compositions of an architectonic order. The Claude Lorrain painting, *The Sermon on the Mount*, is one of the largest paintings in the Collection, while Chardin's *Still Life* is one of the smaller canvases. Nevertheless, Chardin's assemblage of plums, squash, and domestic containers seems almost as monumental and solid as Claude's mountain. It was the illusionistic realism of such pictures that the artist's contemporaries marveled at, and that led Diderot to speak of their "magic." It was to Diderot that Chardin revealed the source of his prodigious tactile sense, saying it was by touch and not by sight that he judged, say, the roundness of pine kernels (or here, of plums), rolling them gently between his thumb and forefinger. Modern eyes appreciate too the rich, creamy surfaces of his paintings, which seem to breathe and have a life of their own. Source: *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History Pillet, Paris. Léon Michel-Lévy, Paris. His sale, June 17-18, 1925, Paris, Lot 126, sold for 220,000 francs to Wildenstein. D. David-Weill, Paris; Wildenstein (1937). Frick, 1945. Source: *Paintings in The Frick Collection: French, Italian and Spanish*. Volume II. New York: The Frick Collection, 1968.