



The Frist opens its first two exhibits of 2016

Something Old, Something New

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A R T S A N » A R C H I T E C T U R E

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The Frist wears the mantle of a populist art center well — for every show of crowd-pleasing historical art, there's generally a slow-burning analog of something weirder. It's like having a Catbird Seat inside a Mas Tacos — although which show is The Catbird Seat and which is Mas Tacos depends on your perspective and taste in art. To wit: Friday's openings at the Frist, the first two exhibits in the 2016 lineup, which are just about as different as two top-notch exhibitions can be.

First up is the principal show, *Treasures From the House of Alba*, which might be the Frist's biggest attraction of the year. More than 130 works — including masterpieces of Dutch, Flemish, German, Italian and Spanish art — are being exhibited for the first time outside of Spain, where they were collected over the centuries in the palaces of Alba, one of the most prominent noble families in the political and cultural history of Spain. The duchess of Alba was a frequent subject of paintings by Francisco Goya — Ava Gardner played her in *The Naked Maja*, a 1958 film about the alleged romance between the two — and his 1795 portrait "The Duchess of Alba in White" is an exhibition high point. Another highlight is Diego Velasquez's "The Infanta Margarita," a 1653 portrait of the child who, three years later, would be the subject of his most celebrated work, "Las Meninas." The artworks' provenance is superb — there are even handwritten documents and maps by Christopher Columbus. Even patrons who are anti-Columbus Day will likely be awed by the explorer's list of people who accompanied him on the 1492 "Journey of Discovery." To learn more about the stories behind the Alba collection, come to Friday's opening-day lecture by Mark A. Roglán, director of The Meadows Museum in Dallas, at 6:30 p.m. in the Frist's auditorium.

Tucked behind the Alba show is an exhibition of four films from Guido van der Werve's *Nummers (Numbers)* series. If you think four seems like a small number of works for an exhibition, you might not be familiar with the visually hypnotic but thematically heavy work of van der Werve — there's a lot to take in. Of particular note is the "14" of the exhibition's title: "Nummer veertien, home" is a 2012 film that curator Mark Scala calls the artist's tour-de-force. "This nearly hourlong film," says Scala in the exhibit's gallery guide, "combines van der Werve's two great passions: the music of Chopin and endurance athletics, specifically long-distance and Ironman triathlons." The film shows van der Werve swimming, biking and running more than 1,703 kilometers from Warsaw (the city near Chopin's birthplace of Zelazowa Wola, Poland) to Paris (where the composer died at age 38). The Dutch artist will be speaking about his work and the trajectory it's taken over the past 15 years at noon on opening day at the Frist.

Both the House of Alba and the van der Werve shows could stand alone, but having both at once underscores how valuable it is to have multiple voices sharing multiple perceptions of art — neither is wrong, and we're all better for being able to participate in the conversation.

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Treasures from the House of Alba: 500 Years of Art and Collecting & Guido van der Werve: Nummers 2 6 8 14

Opening Feb. 5 at the Frist



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