

Weekend Arts II

The Frick Collection Names New Architect for Renovation

By ROBIN POGREBIN

Ever since the Frick Collection yielded to public protest and abandoned plans for a six-story addition last year, curiosity has mounted as to how that museum would revise its renovation plans.

Now the Frick has taken the first step in that direction. On Thursday, the board approved the selection of Annabelle Selldorf's architecture firm, whose projects have included the Neue Galerie in Manhattan and the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass.

"She's somebody who has a clear vision of respect for historical buildings but at the same time has a clean, elegant, modernist aesthetic that is very much about welcoming visitors today," said Ian Wardropper, the Frick's director.

In coming up with a new design, Ms. Selldorf has been charged with improving circulation in the Frick's galleries, library and public spaces, while maintaining the museum's existing footprint and preserving its jewel-box character. A late Gilded Age mansion, it was designed from 1912-14 by Thomas Hastings for the industrialist Henry Clay Frick.

"It's about enhancing the visitor's experience and making it utterly seamless, so that it doesn't harm any of the existing experience that people cherish, myself included," Ms. Selldorf said in a telephone interview. "We'll do our



BRIGITTE LACOMBE

Annabelle Selldorf's firm has been named the architect for renovations at the Frick Collection, replacing Davis Brody Bond.

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darnedest."

There is no design yet; Ms. Selldorf, of Selldorf Architects, was selected for her approach, Mr. Wardropper said, which he described as "very thoughtful." Designs are expected to be completed by next winter, the museum said, to be followed by a

yearlong approval process. "We don't want to hurry it," Mr. Wardropper said. "This is a really important project for us and we want to be sure it's right."

Over the last 18 months, the Frick evaluated a wide pool of architects, inviting 20 to submit proposals before deciding on Ms. Selldorf.

She replaces Davis Brody Bond, a firm whose design would have eliminated a gated garden on East 70th Street, designed by the British landscape architect Russell Page. That design also called for opening the museum's private upstairs rooms to the public and offered views of Central Park from a new roof garden.

That plan was roundly criticized by architects, neighbors and critics, as well as three former commissioners of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Ms. Selldorf said that eliminating the gated landscape remains off the table. "There is no question that we're not going to disturb the garden," she said. "I think everyone has come around to the idea that the garden is very much part of the ensemble, which is something important that the museum came to appreciate."

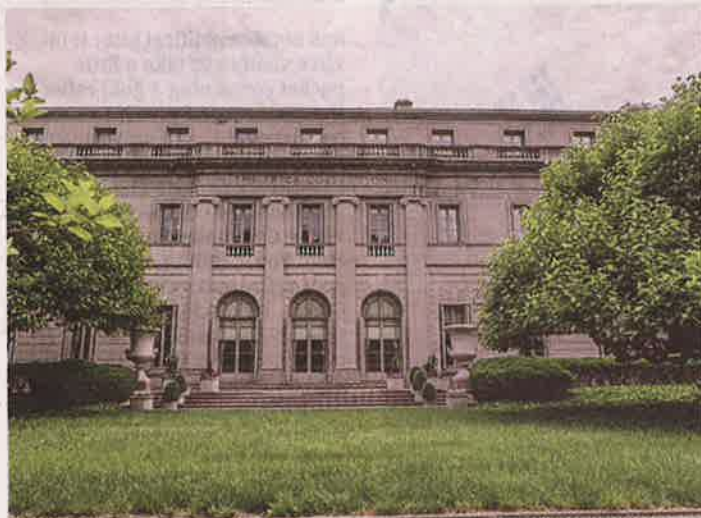
The Frick will continue to evaluate how best to reimagine the historic building, to make better use of its period rooms and below-ground area. "Some are subterranean; it may involve building to-

wards the back of the library, but not encroaching on it," Mr. Wardropper said. "Adapting existing space like the second floor was definitely one of the reasons we favored Annabelle, because she's done so well with those kinds of jobs."

"In the end," he added, "it's about creating a kind of seamless set of spaces that respect what the Frick is all about — the intimacy, the quality of our collections, but adding spaces that will seem as if they were always there."

While she is aware of the controversy that accompanied this project the last time around, Ms. Selldorf said that the previous architectural plans did not figure into her proposal and that she has not seen them.

Mr. Wardropper emphasized that the Frick is starting fresh. "We're really happy that we're beginning this process," he said. "And it is going to be a process."



EMON HASSAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Frick Collection, at Fifth Avenue and 70th Street.