

# GREY ART NYU GALLERY

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***Toxic Beauty: The Art of Frank Moore***  
**At NYU's Grey Art Gallery and Fales Library**  
**September 6 – December 8, 2012**

**First New York museum solo exhibition of artist Frank Moore**  
**Retrospective explores themes of the environment, the AIDS crisis,**  
**and the 1980s Downtown New York scene**

New York City (May 2, 2012)—On view from September 6 through December 8, 2012, at **New York University's Grey Art Gallery and Fales Library**, *Toxic Beauty: The Art of Frank Moore* is the most comprehensive presentation to date of work by this remarkable artist whose life was cut short by AIDS. Curated by independent scholar **Susan Harris** with Grey Art Gallery director **Lynn Gumpert**, the exhibition features approximately 35 major paintings and over 50 gouaches, prints, and drawings, as well as numerous sketchbooks, films, maquettes, source materials, and ephemera.

Spanning Frank Moore's entire career, the retrospective will be on view at both the Grey Art Gallery and the **Tracey/Barry Gallery** at Fales Library, which houses NYU's special collections and renowned **Downtown Collection**, the world's most extensive archive of books, journals, posters, and ephemera relating to lower Manhattan's artistic scene since 1970. "We are pleased to host this first major survey of Frank Moore's remarkable work," notes Lynn Gumpert. "The Grey Art Gallery and Fales Library are ideal locations for this scholarly assessment. NYU's lower Manhattan location was also the former stomping grounds of Moore and his artist friends active in the Downtown scene."

Born in New York City, Frank Moore (1953–2002) was raised on Long Island and spent his childhood summers in the Adirondacks, sparking a lifelong interest in the natural environment. He went on to study art and psychology at Yale University and spent a year in Paris from 1977–78 at the Cité des Arts. Returning to Manhattan in 1979, Moore enthusiastically participated in the burgeoning art scene.



Frank Moore, *Patient*, 1997–98. Oil and silkscreen on canvas mounted on wood, in artist's frame (red pine). 49 1/2 x 65 1/2 x 3 1/2 in. Private collection, Milan. Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York

Moore is best known for his figurative and highly detailed large-scale paintings filled with fantastic and symbolic images. The works' intricate, polished surfaces and allegorical content create compelling windows into provocative alternate universes. Moore's paintings allude to American culture and presciently address ecological concerns and the dangers of genetically modified foods. Often autobiographical, many of the paintings also reference Moore's personal life and his HIV-positive status. His focus on AIDS and the state of the health care industry culminate in paintings such as *Wizard* (1994), which features pharmaceutical containers embedded in the frame. "The vast array of themes Frank Moore addresses in his paintings reveals a Renaissance-like approach to making art," observes Susan Harris, guest curator of the exhibition. "He meticulously researched these themes and invented a complex and stunning visual vocabulary with which to explore them."

Moore frequently created elaborate, customized frames for his already complex images. Employing diverse materials such as rough-hewn wood, seed packets, rope, and bound books, Moore set off dynamic interactions between unique three-dimensional sculptural frames and their two-dimensional yet illusionistic subjects. A series of paintings about Niagara Falls are encircled by copper piping and spigots, alluding to the flow of water and to the fact that the Falls can be turned on and off. The Niagara Falls series and others demonstrate Moore's admiration for American landscape painters, such as the Hudson River School artists. Rather than marveling at the sublime wonder of nature, however, Moore drew attention to increasing pollution plaguing the environment: in *Niagara* (1994–95), stenciled chemical symbols churn in the falls' waves and waft away with the mist, reflecting the numerous contaminants that have been identified in this quintessentially American landmark. Cognizant of his own humble vegetable garden in Deposit, New York, and of America's vast but overused national parks, Moore depicted nature's many "sites of great, but toxic, beauty."

In addition to creating his paintings and works on paper, he collaborated on performances, dance productions, and films. Throughout the 1980s, Moore worked with innovative choreographer Jim Self on the experimental film *Beehive* (1982–86), which won the prestigious Bessie award in 1985. *Beehive*—a balletic narrative about the daily activities of a colony of bees—will be screened as part of *Toxic Beauty* and will be accompanied by Moore's never-before-exhibited preparatory sketches for the film's costume and set designs, storyboards, and production notes.

Alongside his multifaceted artistic endeavors, Moore was also an activist: he was an early member of the group Visual AIDS and participated in the creation of the AIDS red ribbon. He also helped develop the Archive Project, which endeavors to document and preserve works created by people with AIDS in all artistic disciplines.

The Grey's previous collaborations with Fales Library have resulted in the well-received exhibitions *The Downtown Show: The New York Art Scene, 1974–1984* and *Downtown Pix: Mining the Fales Archives, 1961–1991*, shown in 2006 and 2010 respectively. Moore's involvement with NYU extends back to 1980, when he lectured about artists designing for dance productions in conjunction with the Grey Art Gallery's Sonia Delaunay retrospective.

### **Exhibition Catalogue:**

*Toxic Beauty: The Art of Frank Moore* is accompanied by an amply illustrated catalogue with essays by Susan Harris, renowned critic Klaus Kertess, and artist/activist Gregg Bordowitz.

Harris evokes a compelling portrait of the multitalented artist as revealed through his personal papers and notebooks. Kertess examines Moore's recurrent themes and eclectic influences while situating the artist's work within a larger art historical context. Finally, Bordowitz sheds light on Moore's passionate AIDS activism and how his work conveys feelings of loss, fear, and hope as well as gay male identity during the early days of the pandemic. The catalogue will also include a selected bibliography, chronology, and excerpts from Moore's own writings. Both the exhibition and catalogue will highlight previously unpublished archival material—such as sketchbooks and documents—culled from the vast **Frank Moore Papers**, totaling 44 linear feet, housed at NYU's Fales Library. These archival materials provide fascinating insights into Moore's life and work: the sketchbooks reveal his penchant for journaling and his extraordinary draftsmanship. The drawings include detailed preparatory studies for his large-scale paintings and custom-crafted frames, as well as lighthearted vignettes of a more personal and even humorous nature.

**Sponsorship:**

*Toxic Beauty: The Art of Frank Moore* is organized by the Grey Art Gallery, New York University, and curated by Susan Harris with Lynn Gumpert. It is made possible in part by the generous support of the Gesso Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Gian Enzo Sperone, and Beth Rudin DeWoody. Additional support is provided by the Grey's Director's Circle, Inter/National Council, and Friends; and the Abby Weed Grey Trust.

The estate of Frank Moore is represented by Sperone Westwater.

**About the Grey Art Gallery:**

The Grey Art Gallery is New York University's fine-arts museum, located on historic Washington Square Park in New York City's Greenwich Village. It offers the NYU community and the general public a dynamic roster of engaging and thought-provoking exhibitions, all of them enriched by public programs. With its emphasis on experimentation and interpretation, and its focus on exploring art in its historical, cultural, and social contexts, the Grey serves as a museum-laboratory for the exploration of art's environments.

Exhibitions organized by the Grey have encompassed all the visual arts: painting, sculpture, drawing and printmaking, photography, architecture and decorative arts, video, film, and performance. In addition to producing its own exhibitions, which often travel to other venues in the United States and abroad, the Gallery hosts traveling shows that might otherwise not be seen in New York and produces scholarly publications that are distributed worldwide.

**General Information:**

Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 100 Washington Square East, New York, NY 10003

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E-mail: [greyartgallery@nyu.edu](mailto:greyartgallery@nyu.edu)

Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/greyart>

**Hours:**

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 11 am–6 pm

**OPEN LATE** Wednesday: 11 am–8 pm

Saturday: 11 am–5 pm

Sunday, Monday, and major holidays: Closed

**Admission:** Suggested donation: \$3; NYU students, faculty, and staff: free of charge