

Time Out

Joseph R. Wolin: Edmund de Waal at The Frick Collection

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"Elective Affinities: Edmund de Waal at The Frick Collection"

Art, Contemporary art [The Frick Collection](#), Upper East Side Until Sunday November 10 2019 ★★★★★



Photograph: Christopher Burke, © Edmund de Waal, courtesy the artist and The Frick Collection

TIME OUT SAYS

★★★★★

DETAILS

DATES AND TIMES

USERS SAY

While many museums commission contemporary artists to jazz up staid permanent collections, at the Frick, writer and sculptor Edmund de Waal has installed nine works that seem to actually increase the hush of its galleries. On pieces of antique furniture throughout the museum, de Waal has placed glass and steel vitrines that hold arrangements of small objects in a limited palette of color, material and form: Tubular vases and shallow bowls in white or dark gray porcelain; stacked ingots and thin sheets of steel; blocks of gleaming alabaster. The ensembles recall still life paintings, those of Giorgio Morandi in particular, but also architectural massing studies. Several subtly echo the rhythm of figures and other elements in nearby old master paintings, as well as the Frick's own configurations of decorative art.

Reticent and contingent, de Waal's sculptures depend on their ability to convince us of the artist's refined sensitivities to context and place, and they can veer off towards twee preciousness at times. The best of them, however, like one that appears to float atop a credenza in front of Duccio's 14th-century *The Temptation of Christ on the Mountain*, function like poetically abstract guides to the collection. Here, two white-enameled, right-angled steel plates rhyme with the tiny walled cities in the bottom corners of Duccio's panel; finger-sized handmade white porcelain cylinders evoke the cast of characters, and a single thin strip covered in gold leaf imparts a sacral aura. Remarkably, de Waal's works can make us feel that we are looking at familiar masterpieces for the first time.

By: Joseph R. Wolin

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