

**Frank Walter: Works from the Cowles-Hoard Collection**  
**January 9 – February 28, 2026**

A self-taught artist born on the Caribbean island of Antigua in 1926, Frank Walter was descended from both enslaved Africans and Scottish plantation owners. Highly educated and ambitious, at the age of 22, he became the first person of color on the island to manage a sugar plantation. After Hurricane Dog ravaged Antigua in 1950, he traveled to England to learn methods to modernize the sugar industry and to research his family history. The racism and indifference he faced while working odd jobs in Europe over the next decade would greatly influence his later creative work. On his return to Antigua in 1961, he focused on his captivating art and writing.

Before his death at the age of 82, Walter produced thousands of soulful paintings and drawings, hundreds of hand-carved wood sculptures, tens of thousands of pages of arresting writing, as well as audio recordings and photographs. His work was largely overlooked during his lifetime, but since his passing, he has gained worldwide recognition for his vivid portraits and atmospheric landscapes painted on unusual surfaces such as wood scraps and cardboard from Polaroid film cartridges.

Walter received significant international posthumous acclaim when his work represented Antigua and Barbuda at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017, marking the nation's first participation in the event. After seeing Walter's work in Venice, the renowned Swiss curator, writer, and Serpentine Gallery Director Hans Ulrich Obrist referred to the Caribbean polymath as the "Leonardo da Vinci of Antigua." In 2020, *Frank Walter: A Retrospective* at the Museum MMK Für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, Germany, marked the artist's first museum exhibition. With over 150 works from the Cowles-Hoard Collection selected by Museum Director Susanne Pfeffer, the show presented an overview of his visionary work alongside works by contemporary artists addressing colonialism and postcolonial thought.

This exhibition seeks to not only highlight the brilliance of Frank Walter but to also provide insight into the greatest patrons of the artist during his lifetime, the Cowles-Hoard Family. What does it mean to be a patron when no-one seems to be looking; to collect hundreds of objects that would otherwise go unseen? Their experience with Walter was uplifting, and in the words of Wiley Hoard "defines what it means to feel alive from art, to be a collector." This exhibition is a testament to the inspiration one artist bestowed upon a family, and ultimately to so many others in the decades that would follow.

Initially drawn to Walter's series of small alphabet works, which featured colorful letters representing animals and everyday objects, the family bought many sets of 26-picture collections (one for each letter), giving them to family and friends and displaying them at home. After many years, the artist disappeared from his usual spot on the docks, and the family lost track of him for an extended period. Eventually, they learned he had moved into a dilapidated shack without electricity or running water that he had built on a hillside in a more rural part of the island. After visiting him there, they sent Walter food and art supplies and eventually collected over 300 paintings and sculptures.

*Frank Walter: Works from the Cowles-Hoard Collection* commemorates the artist's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and features approximately 35 intriguing paintings and sculptures, along with a complete set of his

alphabet pictures, rendered in oil and pen on Xerox paper. There are also intimate portraits and pastoral scenes painted on paper, cards, spools, record sleeves, cardboard, and scraps of wood, alongside surreal beings and everyday people, beautifully carved from bits of wood.

Since the 2020 Museum MMK retrospective, several other major exhibitions have been mounted, including solo shows at Ingleby in Edinburgh (2015, 2021), Hirschl & Adler in New York (2016), Xavier Hufkens in Brussels (2022), the Garden Museum in London (2023), The Drawing Center in New York (2024), and David Zwirner in London (2021), New York (2022, curated by Hilton Als), Hong Kong (2023), and Paris (2025). There have also been group exhibitions at Andrew Edlin Gallery, Karma, Pinault Collection, Maureen Paley, Centre Pompidou-Metz, and many other galleries and museums. Several books and catalogues have been published on Walter including *Frank Walter: The Last Universal Man* (Radius Books, 2017), *By Land, Air, Home, and Sea: The World of Frank Walter* (David Zwirner Books, 2024), and *Frank Walter: To Capture a Soul* (The Drawing Center, 2024).