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BLANTON EXHIBITION EXPLORES THE CAPTIVATING AND UNSANITIZED WORLD OF GRIMM’S FAIRY TALES

Natalie Frank: The Brothers Grimm
July 11–November 15, 2015

AUSTIN, TX—April 15, 2015—The Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin presents Natalie Frank: The Brothers Grimm, an exhibition of more than 30 gouache and pastel drawings by artist Natalie Frank, a New York-based Austin native. Organized by The Drawing Center in New York, this presentation explores the 19th-century fairy tales of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, including well-known stories such as Cinderella and Snow White, and more obscure tales such as The Lettuce Donkey and The Ungrateful Son. Her drawings function as a feminist reimagining of the stories. In them, Frank renders key scenes from each fairy tale, investigating the ways in which they address gender, sexuality, and complex familial dynamics. Drawing upon the history of illustrated books, figuration, and personal and political narrative, Frank’s drawings represent the largest collection of Grimm’s fairy tales ever illustrated by a fine artist.

“Natalie Frank shares with us her striking vision for the original folk tales by the Brothers Grimm, which are complex and at times very intense," remarks Blanton director Simone Wicha. “Her vibrant and evocative drawings will change the way we understand the fairy tales that so many of us grew up with and will surely capture the curiosity of art lovers and literary buffs alike. We are thrilled to partner with The Drawing Center to bring this exhibition to the Blanton. "

Written between 1812 and 1857 and subsequently translated into more than 160 languages, the Grimm’s fairy tales are known and loved by children the world over. What is less known is that these stories were originally intended for adults, with later editions expunged of sexuality and violence. Even lesser known is that while the Grimm brothers gathered and adapted these stories for print, the stories were first oral tales that were
produced, collected, and shared largely by women. For this body of work, Frank uses the original, often graphic versions of the narratives as a point of departure, examining the vast emotional, physical, and intellectual transformation of the stories' female characters. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, Frank described delving into the early, unsanitized editions where women held almost no power over their fates. In these stories, the princesses, hags, and witches seemed complex; according to Ms. Frank, "I started making drawings that could reflect these characters’ vulnerabilities and strengths."

A virtuosic painter, she has chosen to work exclusively—and for the first time—in gouache and chalk pastel. Her decision to translate the Grimm stories into drawings is fitting given the tradition of illustration in these narratives: although the first editions were not illustrated, a third Grimm brother illustrated subsequent editions as part of a larger sanitization of the tales that attempted to increase their broad popularity and appeal to children. Many of the stories we identify most closely with the Grimms today we associate with illustrations that have denied these stories’ dark and original forms.

Alongside this exhibition, Frank’s first book, published by Damiani and designed by Marian Bantjes, explores 36 of these original tales through a collection of 75 color drawings, accompanied by hand-drawn title pages, borders, and drawings throughout the book. Using translations by fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes and with an introduction by Zipes, the book also includes an essay by Drawing Center Senior Curator Claire Gilman, a conversation between the artist and Tony-award winning director Julie Taymor, and an essay by the distinguished feminist art historian, Linda Nochlin. In her essay for the book, Nochlin writes, "Frank’s versions of the familiar and not-so-familiar tales are unsyrupy and anti-Disneyesque, sometimes gruesome. Cruelty and crude eroticism, magic and bizarre fantasy, mark their folkloristic roots; weirdness and irrationality distance them from both everyday life and the moralism of happily ever after."

The Blanton has recently acquired seven works from Frank’s Brothers Grimm series: four drawings dedicated to Cinderella and three devoted to Rapunzel. This exhibition marks the first time that they will be presented at the museum.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the following public programs have been organized, among others:

**Conversation with Natalie Frank**  
**Saturday, July 11, 3 PM**

Natalie Frank speaks about her adaption of fairy tales in the exhibition The Brothers Grimm with Blanton curator Veronica Roberts

**Storytelling with Tom Lee**  
**Thursday, October 15, 6:30 PM**
Storyteller Tom Lee performs a selection of stories depicted in Natalie Frank's drawings of the tales of the Brothers Grimm. This performance emphasizes the stories as they appeared in the first edition, with darker tones than the later revisions.

**Natalie Frank: The Brothers Grimm** is organized by The Drawing Center, New York. Support for the exhibition at the Blanton is provided by Kathleen and Christopher Loughlin.

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**About Natalie Frank**

New York-based painter Natalie Frank was born in Austin, Texas in 1980. She earned an M.F.A. in visual arts at Columbia University's School of the Arts in 2006 and holds a B.A. in studio art from Yale University. In 2003-2004, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for study at the National Academy of Fine Art in Oslo, Norway. In 1997 and 1999, Frank attended the Slade School in London, and in 2001 the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. In 2015, she was one of 100 artists featured in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Artists Project, an online series of videos in which contemporary artists respond to works in the Met's collection that spark their imaginations.

Solo exhibitions include shows at Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago; Fredericks & Freiser, New York; Arndt and Partner, Zurich; Mitchell-Innes and Nash, New York; Briggs Robinson Gallery, New York; Space SBH, St. Barth’s. Other recent projects include group exhibitions at The London Museum of Design; Lu Magnus, New York (co-curator); The Rose Art Museum, Waltham, MA; Hezi Cohen Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel; The National Academy Museum, New York; The Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, PA; the Brattleboro Museum, Brattleboro, VT; Arndt and Partner, Berlin, Germany; and Jack Tilton Gallery, New York.

Frank's works are included in the collections of the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Rose Art Museum.

**About the Blanton Museum of Art**

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art is one of the foremost university art museums in the country and holds the largest public collection in Central Texas. Recognized for its modern and contemporary American and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, the Blanton offers thought provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

The museum is located at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Congress Avenue and is open Tuesday though Friday from 10-5, Saturday from 11-5, and Sunday from 1-5. Thursdays are free admission days and every third Thursday the museum is open until 9. Admission Prices: Adults $9, Kids 12 and under FREE, Seniors (65+) $7, Youth/College Students (13-21) $5. Admission is free to members, all current UT ID-holders. For additional information call (512) 471-7324 or visit [www.blantonmuseum.org](http://www.blantonmuseum.org)
Images:

Natalie Frank
*All Fur III*, 2011–14
Gouache and chalk pastel on Arches paper
22 x 30 inches
Collection of the artist

Natalie Frank
*Cinderella II*, 2011–14
Gouache and chalk pastel on Arches paper
22 x 30 inches
Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin; Promised gift of Kathleen Irwin Loughlin and Chris Loughlin

For high-resolution images, and additional information, please contact:

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