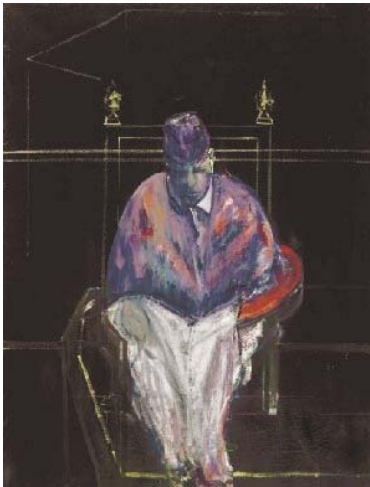


For Immediate Release

8 January 2007

Contact: Rhiannon Broomfield +44 (0) 207 389 2117 rbroomfield@christies.com

FRANCIS BACON'S PORTRAIT LEADS CHRISTIE'S LONDON POST WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING SALE IN FEBRUARY 2007



Francis Bacon (1909-1992)
Study for Portrait II, 1956
Estimate upon request

Post War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Christie's London

Thursday, 8 February 2007 at 7:00 pm

London – One of the most important works by Francis Bacon (1909-1992) to ever appear at auction leads Christie's **Post War & Contemporary Art Evening Sale** on Thursday, 8 February 2007. Painted in 1956, *Study for Portrait II* (estimate on request) appears in public and at auction for the first time having last been exhibited in 1963.

"This is an exciting opportunity to be able to work with such a significant painting," said **Pilar Ordovas, Head of Post War & Contemporary Art, Christie's London**. *"It is the most important work from Bacon's Pope series to appear on the market and we expect records to be broken when it is offered in February at Christie's in London."*

A unique and important work, *Study for a Portrait II* is one of Francis Bacon's famous papal portraits in which many of the elements of his ongoing series of *Pope* paintings from the 1950s are brought together within one powerful image. Extraordinary and unforgettable images that shocked and provoked viewers when they first emerged into the public

consciousness in the early 1950s, today they are regarded as being among the foremost images of twentieth century art.

Francis Bacon was obsessed by Diego Velazquez's 1650 *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* and thought it "one of the greatest portraits that has ever been made". Bacon painted over fifty paintings of *Popes* during his career, beginning in 1946 with three portraits 'after Velazquez's Innocent X' all of which he destroyed soon afterwards. The seed however, had evidently been sown, and within months, he began again to reinvestigate the subject and the powerful 'sensation' that this portrait had awoken in him.

Study for a Portrait II is presumably the second of two paintings of popes that Bacon painted in the autumn of 1956 - the first being the very different and clearly 'after Velasquez' painting *Study for a Portrait I* now in the National Gallery of Canada. Unlike the dramatic and tempestuous 'screaming Popes' which Bacon had painted in the early 1950s, *Study for a Portrait II* presents, for perhaps the first time, a sympathetic image of the Pope as a tragic hero brought low by the external forces around him.

Study for a Portrait II was one of the first paintings that Bacon made on his return to London from Morocco in autumn 1956 and marks the beginning of an important turning point in both his art and his life. Bacon began going to Tangiers primarily to visit his long-term lover Peter Lacy - a man whom, despite frequent attempts, Bacon seemed unable to rid himself of and whose face haunts a whole range of his paintings of the 1950s. Lacy was a troubled man given to bouts of sadistic violence and prolonged periods of self-hatred. He was also the first man with whom Francis Bacon, by his own account, fell 'head-over-heals' in love with. Bacon was drawn irresistibly to the peculiar mixture of toughness, brutality and fragility that Lacy embodied in much the same way as he had been sexually attracted in his youth to his own domineering father. Bacon's visit to in Tangiers in 1956 awoke in him the sad realisation that his demonic lover was doomed; Lacy died in the city in 1962.

Lacy had been a dominant and tyrannical figure in both Bacon's life and his art - a real-life echo of the father-figures, fascists, bullies and popes that he had painted in the late 1940s and early 1950s. After seeing Lacy in Morocco, Bacon had now come to recognise his lover as also being a small and broken man. While *Study for a Portrait II* is in no way a portrait of Lacy, not even bearing any physical resemblance to him, as several of Bacon's papal portraits in fact do, it is, interestingly, a portrait of a man imprisoned by himself, trapped by the apparatus of a life that has been thrust upon him.

#

Visit Christie's at www.christies.com

A selection of images is available on request

Notes to Editors

Record for Francis Bacon

The current record for any work by Francis Bacon is *Version No. 2 of lying figure with hypodermic syringe*, 1968 sold at Sotheby's New York in November 2006 for \$15,024,000. Second to this is *Study for a Pope I*, 1961 sold at Christie's New York in November 2005 for \$10,096,000

International Exhibition Tour

- 26-28 January 2007: Christie's Rockefeller Centre, New York

Christie's London Auctions in February 2007 of Impressionist & Modern Art and Post War & Contemporary Art:

- Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale followed by The Art of the Surreal : Tuesday, 6 February 2007 at 6:00 pm
- Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale: Wednesday, 7 February 2007 at 2.00pm
- Impressionist and Modern Works on Paper: Thursday, 8 February 2007 at 10:30 am
- Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale: Thursday, 8 February 2007 at 7:00 pm
- Post-War and Contemporary Art Day Sale: Friday, 9 February 2007 at 10:30 am

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global sales in 2005 that totaled \$3.2 billion. It is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service, and international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewelry, photographs, collectibles, wine, cars and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai and Hong Kong. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging markets such Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.