

For Immediate Release

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SEMINAL PORTRAITS BY FRANCIS BACON AND LUCIAN FREUD TO BE SOLD AT CHRISTIE'S IN JUNE



From left to right: *Girl with Towel* (estimate: £1,800,000-2,200,000) by Lucian Freud (51 x 51cm), *Portrait of George Dyer Staring into a Mirror* (estimate: £2,500,000 – 3,500,000) by Francis Bacon (198 x 148cm) and *Bella* (estimate £1,800,000-2,200,000) by Lucian Freud (61 x 56cm)

Post-War & Contemporary Art

23 June 2005

London- Christie's June 2005 *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening sale*, to be staged on 23 June 2005, is led by three portraits painted by Britain's most eminent Post-War artists, Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud. In *Portrait of George Dyer Staring into a Mirror*, 1967 (estimate: £2,500,000 – 3,500,000), Francis Bacon depicts his greatest model and 'Muse' George Dyer. Lucian Freud is represented by two seminal works, *Girl with Towel* (estimate: £1,800,000-2,200,000), painted in 1967, and *Bella*, a rare example of a nude portrait of the artist's daughter (estimate £1,800,000-2,200,000). The June evening sale, which will offer 65 lots, with an estimated value of £19 million, the largest sale ever to have been staged in London, will also offer an extremely impressive number of quality works by leading contemporary practitioners (*please see separate press release*).

"Christie's remains in its position as the market leader in Post-War and Contemporary Art and in the past two years, Christie's has outsold our main competitor globally by nearly £25 million," says Fernando Mignoni, Director of the department. *"In spring 2004, Christie's New York became the only auction house to break the \$100 million mark for an Evening Sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art, and in May, Christie's New York pushed ahead even further, when evening sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art totalled \$133,707,200 (£71,120,851). The February*

2005 sales of Post-War and Contemporary Art in London this year were our most successful ever - the Evening sale achieved a total of £24,461,600 (\$45,792,115), the highest sale total ever realised in this category in Europe.”

The meeting between Francis Bacon and George Dyer has become the stuff of art legend. Bacon liked to claim that they met when Bacon rumbled Dyer robbing his flat, although he also told a less glamorous alternative tale of Dyer merely approaching Bacon and his friends in a bar in Soho because they looked like they were having such good drunken fun. Certainly, within a short time, an intense friendship sprung up between the two, and Dyer was to become one of Bacon’s most important partners as well as his greatest model and ‘Muse’.

The large-scale portraits that Bacon painted of Dyer in the 1960s and early 1970s rank as some of his greatest pictures. *Portrait of George Dyer Staring into a Mirror*, painted in 1967, is one of these: in it, the unmistakable features of a suited Dyer (his sense of style was supposedly inspired by the Krays) are shown from two angles, reflected in a mirror. Bacon used this motif in several of his pictures of Dyer, creating a jarring duplicity, a double-portrayal rather than a reflection. The mirror acts almost as a second canvas, Bacon exploring in one canvas a similar refracting multiple depictions of his subject to those in his triptychs. Visually, the rigidity of the forms, the lines and the fields that make up most of the painting jars with the organic, almost haphazard smearing of Dyer’s face and body.

In 1966 Freud began a series of nudes that were to be regarded as his first portraits of the ‘whole’ person, *Girl holding a towel* is close and intimate portrait of a female sitter, to whom he devoted a series of works during this period. The setting of the work is the new studio where he was re-housed after the demolishing of Clarendon Crescent; at 227 Gloucester Terrace he had an l-shaped room to work in with windows facing north and south.

During this period Freud was travelling abroad to see particular paintings. In earlier part of this decade we can clearly see the strong impression that Franz Hals paintings had on his work-with his use of a wider hog’s hair brush and leaving the traces of his brushstrokes exposed. However, in *Girl holding a towel* and the related nudes of the same sitter the effect that a trip to see Courbet’s work, in Montpellier, is striking. *Girl holding a towel* has not been shown to the public since it was exhibited at the Hayward gallery in 1974.

A collaborative product between father and daughter, *Bella* formed part of an important series of paintings of Freud’s daughters that he painted when they became adults in the early 1980s. For Freud, painting his daughters was a way to get to know them more closely after what had often been years of absence while they were growing up and are reflective of the familial intimacy between artist and sitter as well as the paternal and painterly curiosity of the artist. The naming of the sitters in these works, something which Freud rarely does, was also a way of formally and publicly acknowledging his children through his art. Bella is perhaps the best known of all Freud’s children, as a fashion designer of international acclaim, with a list of celebrity clients including Madonna, Kate Moss and Jerry Hall.

Leaning against a sheet almost protectively falling around her, the angular composition, with its characteristic overhead view, powerfully evokes an unusual sense of the preciousness and fragility of the seemingly small figure enfolded by the heavy and durable forms and material of Freud's studio setting. Depicting Bella unwrapped but also cosseted in the folds of material, this painting is strangely reminiscent of Freud's first painting of her made in 1961, *Baby on a Green Sofa*. The pose of Bella, slightly self-conscious, almost to the point of sheltering herself, seems to suggest that, unlike her sister Esther for example, she was less comfortable being naked under her father's famous all-seeing eye than others. The enfolding nature of the composition, with the figure of Bella lying naked and somewhat vulnerable at its apex is enhanced by the strong textural pull into the corners of the work – making the young, animated figure's naked presence at the paintings centre seem all the more startling and unexpected.

Other artists from The School of London represented within the Post-War section of the sale are Leon Kosoff, with *The Flower Stall, Embankment Station (Stormy Spring)* (estimate: £160,000-250,000) and Frank Auerbach's *Portrait of Catherine Lampert II*, 1991, a depiction of the art historian who curated Auerbach's exhibition at the Royal Academy in 2002.

A strong French section is led by Nicolas de Stael's *Maritime au cap* (estimate: £600,000-800,000), painted in 1954 a year before his death. Jean Dubuffet is represented by *Epoux en visite* (estimate: £450,000-650,000), painted in 1964 and inspired by his experimental semi-automatic biro drawings. Yves Klein's *IKB 191* (estimate: £250,000-350,000), was formerly owned by the poet and critic Pierre Restany, one of Klein's greatest advocates.

Notes to Editors

Christie's will sponsor the catalogue for an exhibition of Lucian Freud paintings, at the Museo Correr, Venice from the 11 June – 30 October 2005, coinciding with the Biennale at which Christie's will be displaying a variety of works at the Hotel Gritti Palace, from 9-11 June. Organised by Musei Civici Veneziani, in collaboration with the British Council, produced with Venezia Musei, the exhibition is curated by William Feaver and includes more than ninety works (seventy-five paintings and sixteen etchings), some of them established masterpieces, some new and previously unseen.

For further information on the exhibition please visit www.museiciviviceneziani.it

Impressionist and 20th Century Art at Christie's London in June 2005

Impressionist and Modern Art (evening sale), Tuesday, 21 June

Impressionist and Modern Art (day sale), Wednesday, 22 June

Impressionist and Modern Works on Paper, Thursday, 23 June

Post War and Contemporary (evening sale), Thursday, 23 June

Post War and Contemporary (day sale), Friday, 24 June