

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Matthew Paton
Rhiannon Broomfield

020.7389.2965
020.7389.2117

mpaton@christies.com
rbroomfield@christies.com

BACON'S BLESSING - RENT-CHEQUE PAINTING TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S IN OCTOBER BY THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

- All sale proceeds will be invested into a major new campus for the Royal College of Art in Battersea

Post-War and Contemporary Week, 10 – 16 October 2007

Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale

Sunday, 14 October 2007 at 4pm



King Street – Christie's announce that *Study from the Human Body, Man Turning on the Light* by Francis Bacon (1909-1992) will lead the auction of *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale* at Christie's London on 14 October 2007. The picture is being offered by the Royal College of Art who were given the work directly by the artist as rent for the use of a studio in Cromwell Road in 1969 and who are selling the painting in order to raise funds for a major new campus. The painting is expected to realise £7 to £9 million and all proceeds of the sale will be invested directly into the construction of the new Royal College of Art buildings based in Battersea.

Study from the Human Body, Man Turning on the Light will be the highlight of a series of exhibitions and auctions taking place at Christie's between 10 and 16 October 2007, a week when the international art world will gather in London for a showcase of contemporary art exhibitions and events including *The Frieze Art Fair*.

Sir Christopher Frayling, Rector and Vice-Provost of the Royal College of Art: "*The Royal College of Art has a proud history of nurturing artistic excellence, and we continue to invest in developing the artistic talent of this generation and those to follow. We recently signed a long lease for a site in Battersea on which we are building an exciting new campus which will accommodate the Schools of Fine and Applied Art, as well as providing start-up units for new businesses in the fields of art and design. In order to raise the capital needed to fund this project, the Council of the Royal College of Art has decided to offer Bacon's 'Study from the Human Body' at Christie's in October, with all proceeds devoted to the construction of the new site. Although Francis Bacon never had a personal connection with the College, we are grateful for his short tenancy in 1969, the rent, in spectacular pictorial form, from which will provide countless students with access to modern facilities which will best support and benefit their education and artistic development.*"

Sir Terence Conran, Provost of the Royal College of Art: *“When the College first discussed the possibility of selling this picture in order to raise funds for future development, I met with my friend Francis Bacon to ask about his views of the proposed sale. It pays great testament to the benevolent nature of the artist that he gave the decision his full and enthusiastic support if it would be of benefit to the students of the College. It is indeed a fitting tribute to Francis Bacon that the rent from his short tenancy at the College will now be used to help countless future generations of students at the Royal College of Art.”*

Pilar Ordovas, Director and Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art at Christie's, London: *“Christie's leadership and understanding of the Post-War and Contemporary Art market place us in the best position to offer this exceptional painting at auction in October, and to realise its maximum possible value in order to support fully the Royal College of Art with their exciting plans of developing a new campus in Battersea. We look forward to exhibiting the picture over coming weeks in New York, Hong Kong and London, before offering this extraordinary work with its unique provenance, to the international collecting community in October 2007 during Frieze Week in London.”*

Francis Bacon was never a student or a teacher at the Royal College of Art. However in 1969, after a fire had destroyed his studio, Sir Robin Darwin, the Rector of the College, offered the artist working space while his own was being repaired. In return for the studio, Bacon offered *Study for Bullfight No. 1*. In 1975, the artist requested the picture for the Francis Bacon retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and as a result, the College was offered a replacement, taking receipt of the present work, *Study from the Human Body, Man Turning on the Light*, 1973-74, direct from the artist's studio. Such was the popularity of the substitute painting that the College requested that they be allowed to keep it. Bacon replied that he was very pleased with this decision, as he himself much preferred it to *The Bullfight*.

The Royal College of Art

The Royal College of Art, which is based in Kensington Gore, is investing in a new campus in Battersea which will accommodate the School of Fine Art and the School of Applied Art as well as providing accommodation for start-up units for new businesses in the fields of art and design. Proceeds from the sale of this picture will provide the capital outlay with which to develop a campus which will provide students with access to modern facilities which will best support and benefit their education and artistic development.

The Royal College of Art is the world's only wholly postgraduate art and design institution. Its Royal Charter states that its purpose is: *“to advance learning, knowledge and professional competence particularly in the field of fine arts, in the principles and practice of art and design in their relation to industrial and commercial processes and social developments and other subjects relating thereto through teaching, research and collaboration with industry and commerce.”* A foundation stone of the British arts, prominent alumni of the Royal College of Art include Frank Auerbach, Peter Blake, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Sir James Dyson, Tracy Emin, Barbara Hepworth, David Hockney, Henry Moore, Chris Ofili and Sir Ridley Scott.

Study from the Human Body, Man Turning on the Light

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Bacon produced a group of incredibly visceral studies of the male nude. In *Study from the Human Body, Man Turning on the Light*, he has taken the simple act of switching on the light and transformed it into something strangely brutal. The meat-like quality that Bacon brings to his greatest depictions of flesh invokes the idea of mortality, of the human body being only a step away from a carcass.

This was at the forefront of Bacon's mind as, only two years earlier, his partner George Dyer had committed suicide. This tragedy was followed by a succession of deaths in Bacon's immediate circle, all of which made him feel incredibly vulnerable, and it is this vulnerability and angst that emanates from the picture and fills his greatest paintings from the period.

In his most iconic pictures, Bacon took myriad influences and reconfigured them to strange and shocking new effect. The present figure relates closely to Eadweard Muybridge, whose Victorian-era stop-motion photography studying moving figures is quoted in many of Bacon's most celebrated paintings. Here, the image is taken from a sheet entitled *Striking a Blow with the Right Hand*. This act of violence has been adapted into a simple domestic movement. Muybridge's stop-motion photography is jarringly evident in the pentimento-like forms of the torso, which has ghostly repetitions charting movement, appearing to capture not only the motion but also the essence of the person— what he referred to as their 'emanation.' *Study from the Human Body, Man Turning on the Light* combines the artistic investigation of the human form with an exploration of the human condition, revealing Bacon's anguished existentialism.

Francis Bacon (1909-1992)

Francis Bacon was born in Dublin to English parents. In 1926 he moved to London, taking time out to travel to Berlin and Paris where he absorbed influence from the works of Europe's greatest artists including Michelangelo, Poussin, Velasquez and Picasso. Although he had no formal training as an artist, Bacon was a natural talent and started to exhibit his works in the 1930s. It was not until the 1940s that he became well known, causing sensation amongst the artistic community with his angst-ridden paintings of twisted and mutated forms. By the 1950s, Bacon's work was being exhibited extensively around the United States and Europe as his fame continued to swell. He became one of the most prominent contemporary artists of his lifetime, with major retrospectives in Paris in 1971, the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1975 and the Tate in 1985. He died of a heart attack in Madrid in 1992. Today, Bacon's work is among the most popular of 20th century art at auction and in May 2007 in New York, *Study from Innocent X* sold for \$52,680,000, establishing a world record price for the artist at auction.

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Images available on request
Visit Christie's on the web at www.christies.com

Notes to editors:

- *Study from the Human Body, Man Turning on the Light* will highlight a series of exhibitions and auctions taking place at Christie's newly refurbished King Street and South Kensington salerooms between 10 and 16 October 2007, a week when the international art world will gather in London's for a showcase of contemporary art exhibitions and events including *The Frieze Art Fair*.

The auctions are scheduled as follows:

Sunday 14 October at 4pm	<i>Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale</i>
Monday 15 October at 4pm	<i>The Italian Sale</i>
Tuesday 16 October at 10.00am and 2pm	<i>Post-War and Contemporary Art</i>

- *Study from the Human Body, Man Turning on the Light* will be on public view at the following locations:

Christie's, New York	8 to 10 September 2007
Christie's Hong Kong	5 to 6 October 2007
Christie's, London	10 to 14 October 2007

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2006 that totalled £2.51 billion / \$4.67 billion. Worldwide sales for the first half of 2007 totalled £1.63 billion / \$3.25 billion, an increase of 32% by £ and 45% by \$ from the same period last year and highest half year sales ever in art market history. Christie's 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, jewellery, 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 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 as China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Dubai, Mumbai and Russia. Christie's also offers its clients worldwide access to its sales through Christie's LIVE™, its unique, real-time online bidding service.

About the Royal College of Art

The Royal College of Art is the world's only wholly postgraduate university of art and design, specialising in teaching and research and offering the degrees of MA, MPhil and PhD across the disciplines of fine art, applied art, design, communications and humanities. There are over 900 masters and doctoral students and more than a hundred professionals interacting with them – including scholars, leading art and design practitioners, along with specialists, advisors and distinguished visitors. For more information visit www.rca.ac.uk/bacon/ or contact **Aine Duffy, Head of Media Relations +44 (0)20 7590 4127**