

CHRISTIE'S

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FRANCIS BACON'S MASTERPIECE

FIGURE IN MOVEMENT

TO HIGHLIGHT 20TH CENTURY EVENING SALE



FRANCIS BACON (1909-1992)

Figure in Movement

oil and dye transfer lettering on canvas

Executed in 1976.

Estimate on request

NEW YORK – Christie's is honored to announce ***Figure in Movement***, a masterwork by **Francis Bacon**, will be a leading highlight in the 20th Century Evening Sale taking place on November 9, 2023 at Rockefeller Center. Standing among the great icons of Francis Bacon's oeuvre, *Figure in Movement* is an extraordinary meditation on love, loss and the transience of the human condition. Painted in 1976, it takes its place within the canon of masterworks that followed the tragic death of his beloved George Dyer in 1971. In *Figure in Movement* Bacon bids farewell to his lover. It is a powerful image of the traces life leaves behind, and of the forces that animate them in memory. Never before seen at auction, the painting has remained in the collection of a single private family for nearly half a century. It is estimated in the region of \$50 million.

Alex Rotter, Chairman of 20th and 21st Century Art at Christie's, remarks, "*Figure in Movement is brilliantly expressive, uniquely capturing the emotional turmoil Francis Bacon was experiencing in the critical years following the death of George Dyer. The painting radiates deep pain, passion, and sensuality. Bacon's ability to capture the rawness of the human condition was unmatched and Figure in Movement is a singular example. It represents Bacon at his absolute finest and is an unequivocal masterpiece of 20th century painting. We are thrilled to offer it as a leading highlight this season in our New York Marquee Week of Sales.*"

Figure in Movement is among the best works from the all-important series the artist produced following the death of his love, George Dyer. Martin Harrison, editor of Francis Bacon's catalogue raisonné, called the work "one of Bacon's quintessential images of entropy, a boldly-coloured masterpiece of disorder and inquietude." Esteemed critic David Sylvester said, "of the single large canvases painted in [1970-1976] the present work seems to be the greatest. A further monument... to George Dyer's tragic fall, it is a painting in which a whole range of Baconian devices are brought together with a compelling mastery." The figure's face fuses Dyer's likeness with hints of Bacon's own. With its dark backdrop, the work is conversant with the celebrated 'black triptychs' Bacon produced in the immediate aftermath of Dyer's death. The work is simultaneously a farewell to love lost and an acknowledgement of the undeniable power of living memory.

Bacon first met George Dyer at a pub in 1963 and the pair's relationship developed quickly. Dyer became the artist's muse and is the subject of some of Bacon's most extraordinary portraits. In 1971, just days before the opening of Bacon's retrospective at the Grand Palais in Paris, Dyer was found in the couple's hotel room. Devastated, Bacon turned to art and the subsequent years were pivotal in his career, as he formally processed grief and loss through painting.

Shortly after its creation, *Figure in Movement* was unveiled alongside the black triptychs in Bacon's solo exhibition at the Musée Cantini in Marseille. The show marks his first French museum exhibition outside of Paris; it exhibited paintings made from 1969 to 1976 and captured the full range of his grief of the time. With an outstanding exhibition history that includes landmark retrospectives at the Tate Gallery, London, the Museo Correr, Venice and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, *Figure in Movement* has been widely celebrated in scholarship. Most recently, it was included in the 2018 Beyeler Foundation exhibition Bacon – Giacometti.

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