

For Immediate Release
24 May 2012

Press Release

CHRISTIE'S

Contact:

Cristiano De Lorenzo

tel. +44 7500 815 344

cdelorenzo@christies.com

BRITISH GENIUS

NEW DISCOVERY - BACON'S 'SELF-PORTRAIT'
MARRYING THE ARTIST'S FACE WITH THE BODY OF LUCIAN FREUD
CHRISTIE'S CELEBRATES GREAT ARTISTS' FRIENDSHIP



"How can you cut your flesh open and join it with the other person?"

F. Bacon interview with G. Miller (dir.), 'Francis Bacon: Grand Palais', BBC TV, 1971

quoted in M. Harrison, 'In Camera Francis Bacon: Photography, Film and the Practice of Painting', London, 2005, p. 216

© The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved. DACS 2012.

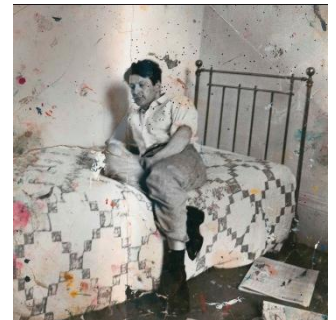
To Be Offered At Christie's
POST-WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING AUCTION
London, King Street - 27 June 2012, 7pm

London – On 27 June, Christie's Evening Auction of Post-War & Contemporary Art will present a selection of important works by two of the greatest British figurative painters of the twentieth century. A major highlight of the auction is the extremely rare *Study for Self-Portrait* painted by Francis Bacon in 1964 (estimate upon request; *illustrated above*). It is a poignant and exceptionally intimate painting by Francis Bacon, which marries the artist's face to the figure of friend and fellow painter, Lucian Freud. It represents one of only twelve, floor-length self-portraits ever to be realised by Francis Bacon, four of which are now held in international museum collections. It is the only to undertake the almost devotional act of conflating the two artist's bodies. Great friendship is the theme of another extraordinary work to be offered at Christie's. *Head of a Greek Man*, is an early painting by Lucian Freud dating from 1946. It comes from the collection of Freud's friend and artist, John Craxton. Portraying the son of the Greek landlady the pair stayed with during their trip to the Greek island of Poros, this landmark painting marks the maturing of Freud's painterly technique at the tender age of 24 (estimate: £1,500,000-2,000,000; *illustrated on the following page*).

Francis Outred, *Christie's Head of Post-War & Contemporary Art, Europe*. "An exciting new discovery at Christie's, 'Study for Self-Portrait' is the only full-length self-portrait known to combine the artist's physiognomy with the physique of Freud, derived from a series of celebrated photographs taken by John Deakin in the 1960s. It is a rare painting from the height of Bacon and Freud's relationship, paying tribute to the creative and emotional proximity both felt for a time. Part of the same artistic circle, the artists deeply impacted one another, both in terms of personality and practice. We are delighted to have united 'Study for Self-Portrait' with another seminal work by Freud, 'Head of a Greek Man' (1946) chronicles the great friendship between Lucian Freud and painter John Craxton, commemorating their travels to Greece at the end of the Second World War. Realised in oil on panel with a fine sable brush, the intimate portrait appears almost liquescent with all traces of Freud's brush-marks melted into the paint surface. It recalls the exquisite painted icons Freud encountered at the Byzantine Museum in Athens during his trip".

BACON'S SELF-PORTRAIT OF FREUD

Extremely rare in the artist's oeuvre, *Study for Self-Portrait* (1964) is a poignant and exceptionally intimate painting by Francis Bacon, which marries the artist's face to the figure of friend and fellow painter, Lucian Freud. It represents one of only twelve, floor-length self-portraits ever to be realised by Francis Bacon, four of which are now held in international museum collections including: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, National Museum Wales, Cardiff and Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal. The present work is the only of these appointed 'self-portraits' to undertake the all-consuming, almost devotional act of conflating the two artists' physiognomies. Deeply contorted, Bacon's piercing eyes, fleshy lips and rounded jaw are still instantly recognisable, while the lean, sculpted limbs and lithe serpentine of the body is unmistakably Lucian Freud. Bacon never painted from life, preferring instead to use the still photographic image; in *Study for Self-Portrait*, these elements are plucked and fused from John Deakin's renowned photo shoot of both men undertaken in 1964. Painter to painter, Bacon and Freud greatly impacted one another, the present work arriving at the very height of their relationship. Arguably the moment of greatest personal and professional contentment in Bacon's career, *Study for Self-Portrait* was painted shortly after the artist's breakthrough retrospective at the Tate Gallery, London in 1962, and the year after his first major American exhibition at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. In this powerfully resolved painting, the artist has combined sensational colour with raw flashes of canvas and an impulsive, dynamic face with a perfectly realised muscular figure. The smooth curves of the calf and trouser leg are reflected in the fluid swathes of paint used to capture the face. Colours abound, with orange and green highlighting the powerful forearm. Soaked into the deepest recesses of the painting, Bacon has applied a layer of inky blue, which closely traces the contours of the human figure. For many years *Study for Self-Portrait* formed part of the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation; a major collection that championed contemporary British painters such as Bacon, Bridget Riley, Frank Auerbach, Leon Kossoff, Graham Sutherland and Peter Blake. (Estimate upon request; *illustrated on the previous page*).



Lucian Freud, c.1964
Photograph: John Deakin
Collection Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane
© The Estate of Francis Bacon.
All rights reserved. DACS 2012



AN EARLY PORTRAIT BY FREUD FROM THE COLLECTION OF JOHN CRAXTON

Rarely seen in public and in the collection of John Craxton and his heirs since 1947, *Head of a Greek Man* (1946) is an exceptional, early portrait by Lucian Freud (estimate: £1,500,000-2,000,000; *illustrated left*). It dates from an important moment in Freud's development, when he travelled to the Greek island of Poros with close friend John Craxton. Exhibited in Freud and Craxton's joint show at the London Gallery in 1947, *Head of a Greek Man* was acquired directly by Craxton, who greatly admired his friend's 'limpid and luminous' aesthetic. Expertly realised with careful, *Ingriste* contours and masterful modulation of light, *Head of a Greek Man* depicts the youthful face and dark features of Petros Mastropetros, the son of a Greek landlady whom Freud and Craxton encountered during their trip to the Saronic Gulf. Painted from an unflinching, frontal perspective with dimensions around half human-scale, *Head of a Greek Man* recalls the painted icons Freud encountered at the Byzantine Museum in Athens during his trip.

* Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.

#

Images available on request

Visit Christie's Website at www.christies.com

Complete catalogue available online at www.christies.com or via the Christie's iPhone app