



# NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

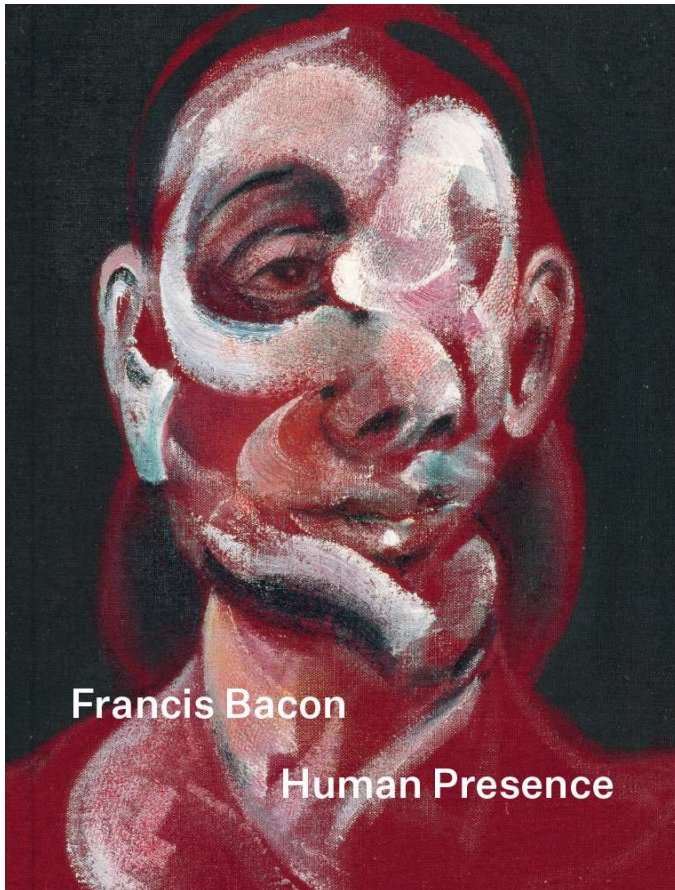
News release

Tuesday 10 September 2024

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## The National Portrait Gallery's new publication dedicated to portraits by Francis Bacon.

*Francis Bacon: Human Presence* features illustrations of the artists' numerous extraordinary portraits of sitters including Lucian Freud, Isabel Rawsthorne and of lovers Peter Lacy and George Dyer, in addition to self-portraits and paintings made in response to portraits by earlier artists.



***Francis Bacon: Human Presence***

03/10/2024

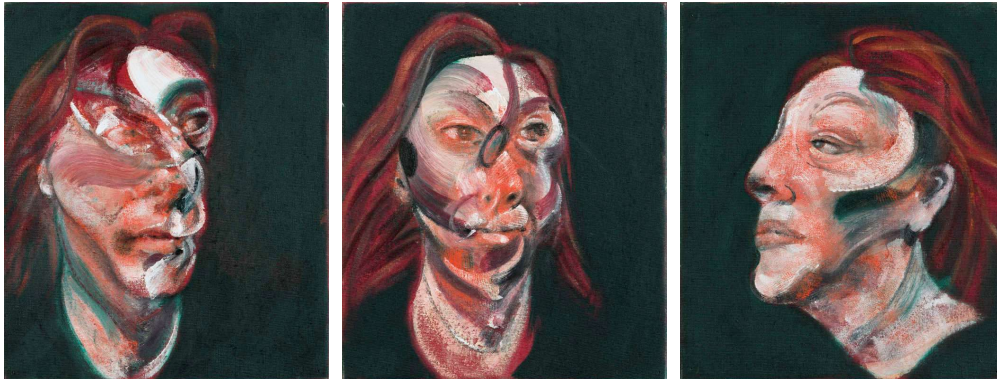
Hardback and Paperback (NPG Exclusive)

£40/£29.95

Rosie Broadley (Curator and Editor), Richard Calvocoressi (Contributor), James Hall (Contributor), Martin Harrison (Contributor), Carol Jacobi (Contributor), John Maybury (Contributor), Sophie Pretorius (Contributor), Gregory Salter (Contributor), Georgia Atienza (Contributor), Tanya Bentley (Contributor).



Featuring works from the 1940s onwards, *Francis Bacon: Human Presence* explores Bacon's deep connection to portraiture and how he challenged traditional definitions of the genre, discarding flattery and distorting likeness, to make portraits with a visceral impact. He not only reimagined historical works by Old Masters, but also made revealing studies of his friends.



Three Studies for a Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne, 1965 by Francis Bacon © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2024. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd. Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia.

From his renowned triptychs and paintings of ghostly figures, to tender and moving individual portraits, the figurative works displayed in this publication chart the development of a groundbreaking artist, highlighting the influence of his peers and other artists.

*Francis Bacon: Human Presence* by Senior Curator Rosie Broadley also features contributions from writers working in different disciplines that explore Bacon's approach to portraiture through different lenses, providing fresh perspectives on the artist, his relationships, his studio and his world.

**“Like other artists working in the post-war period, he rejected long-established expectations of what a portrait should entail – such as mimesis and flattery – but was nevertheless deeply committed to the genre, and held certain historic portraits and their artists in high regard.”**

Rosie Broadley

Joint-Head of Curatorial and Senior Curator of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Collections, National Portrait Gallery

The publication includes associate professor Dr Gregory Salter writing on queer perspectives of Bacon, historian James Hall on the mythology of Bacon's studio, and filmmaker John Maybury on his experience of writing and directing the groundbreaking film about Bacon, *Love is the Devil*.

**“Over the decades since Bacon emerged onto the London art scene at the close of the Second World War, his art has been understandable as having particular meanings for queer subjects and their histories, whether that be pre-decriminalisation cultures and networks that flourished prior to 1967, the solidifying of a gay identity and the search for something like a ‘gay art’ after the early 1970s, or debates about censorship and family life in the late 1980s.”**

Gregory Salter

Associate professor of art history at the University of Birmingham

**“Bacon was always adept at using studios as photogenic stage sets that screamed ‘edgy’, ‘outcast’, ‘reckless’ and ‘bohemian’.”**

James Hall

Art Historian



Francis Bacon by Cecil Beaton, January 1960, © Cecil Beaton Archive / Condé Nast. Francis Bacon; Lucian Freud by Harry Diamond, 1974, © National Portrait Gallery, London.

**“The subsequent days and nights moving from the French House, to Wheelers, to the Colony Room, led to multiple introductions to a wide and varied cast of characters who would push forward to offer their stories of personal encounters with Bacon.”**

John Maybury  
Filmmaker and Director

Other exciting contributors include art historian, Richard Calvocoressi; art historian and Francis Bacon specialist, Martin Harrison; curator at Tate Britain, Carol Jacobi; archivist of The Estate of Francis Bacon, Sophie Pretorius; contemporary curator at the National Portrait Gallery, Tanya Bentley; and assistant curator of photography at the National Portrait Gallery, Georgia Atienza.

*Francis Bacon: Human Presence* includes the artist’s paintings of friends and lovers, who inspired him throughout his life. Bacon’s portraits represent some of his closest relationships – including his partner, Peter Lacy; his lover, George Dyer; his partner in later life, John Edwards; his friend, Henrietta Moraes; the founder of the Colony Club, Muriel Belcher; and his friends and fellow artists, Lucian Freud and Isabel Rawsthorne. The publication also explores Francis Bacon’s own mind and health through archive material and Bacon’s medical records from the Estate of Francis Bacon to deepen the understanding of the motives behind some of Bacon’s creations.



Double Portrait of Lucian Freud and Frank Auerbach, 1964 by Francis Bacon, © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2024. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd, Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Self-Portrait, 1973, 1973 by Francis Bacon © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved, DACS/Artimage 2024. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd. Private Collection.

Portraiture is by its nature biographical, and through a close examination of its presence in Bacon’s work, an intimate picture of the great artist emerges. *Francis Bacon: Human Presence* charts the development of portraiture through Bacon’s career and will be published on the 3 October 2024 ahead of the opening of the exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery.

The publication is currently available to purchase in both Hardback (£40) and Paperback (£29.95), with the paperback exclusively available via the National Portrait Gallery’s Shop.

Both publications can be pre-ordered via:

<https://npgshop.org.uk/collections/books/products/francis-bacon-humanpresence-hardcover-catalogue>

<https://npgshop.org.uk/collections/books/products/francis-bacon-humanpresence-paperback-catalogue>



A free 6x4" print of Francis Bacon will be gifted with every pre-ordered catalogue purchase.

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For further press information, images, extracts and interview requests, please contact:  
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**Notes to editors**

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[Hardback - £40](#)

[Paperback - £29.95](#)

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**National Portrait Gallery**

Founded in 1856, the National Portrait Gallery tells the story of Britain through portraits, using art to bring history to life and explore living today. From global icons, to unsung heroes, our Collection is filled with the stories that have shaped, and continue to shape a nation. We celebrate the power of portraiture and offer encounters with some of the world's greatest and most exciting new artists, promoting engagement with portraiture in all media to a wide-ranging public by conserving, growing and sharing the world's largest collection of portraits.

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