

Bacon and Freud: Graphic Works

18 January – 25 February 2017



Woman with an Arm Tattoo, 1996, etching on paper, 59.6 x 81.6 cm, Freud, Lucian (1922-2011) / © The Lucian Freud Archive / Bridgeman Images



Francis Bacon, *Study for a Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1989, lithograph, 115.6 x 76.8 cm, © The Estate of Francis Bacon. All rights reserved / DACS 2016

Marlborough Graphics is pleased to present an exhibition of prints by Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud. The selected works provide an overview of the artists' graphic output and demonstrate the different approaches each took to printmaking. Friends who rose to prominence in London in the 1950s, Bacon and Freud are widely regarded as the leading figurative artists of the 20th century.

Francis Bacon (1909 - 1992) based his prints on a selection of 35 of his paintings dating from 1955 – 1991. Following a European tradition of artists collaborating with master printers which dates back to the Renaissance, Bacon worked with skilled French, Italian and Spanish printers on a relatively small body of lithographs and a few etchings (totalling only about 40 editions). Marlborough started working with Bacon in 1958 and has carried his graphic works since they were made. Frankie Rossi, Director of Marlborough Graphics explains:

Bacon wanted his prints to look as close to his paintings as possible - his attention to detail and desire for perfection are evident in these works. Prints were produced under his supervision and he personally made changes to proofs when necessary, always ensuring the right colour balance was achieved.

In the lithograph *Study for a Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1989), like Bacon's oil paintings, the work simultaneously repels and intrigues the viewer with its bold, grotesque figure. This paradox remained consistent across his print work. In one of Bacon's final works, the striking triptych *Studies for Self-portrait*, the artist's distorted head emerges from a black background, a representation of the evils and devastation of the human condition. All Bacon prints Marlborough exhibits and deals in were created, approved and signed in his lifetime - with the exception of three editions made in the year of the artist's death, which he approved but did not get the chance to sign. These posthumous prints are stamp signed by the Francis Bacon Estate.

Lucian Freud (1922 – 2011) created his first etching in Paris in 1946, but the height of his graphic output was in the 1990s. The marks and techniques he employed during the etching process were a natural progression from his work as a draughtsman. In his paintings and prints, the influence of one medium on the other can be seen. His subjects were those close and familiar to him, though often anonymous to the viewer. Working in a purist manner, all of Freud's etchings were devoid of colour (bar two editions) and featured minimal backgrounds. Unsettling and unyielding, the works contain a remarkable honesty and an awkwardness that adds to the nervous nature of the images.

In *Woman with an Arm Tattoo* (1996), Freud's interest in the physical qualities of flesh can be seen in the detailed folds of loose skin around the woman's neck and chest. He reveals both the vulnerability and fallibility of the human body. The wear and tear of experience is imprinted, like this woman's tattoo, on the body's surface. Created in the same year, *Self-Portrait: Reflection* (1996) is an etching printed in black ink on white wove Somerset paper; the plate left unwiped for printing to create a background tone on the paper. Age 74 at the time, Freud's hollowed features reveal a disillusioned face with ageing skin, furrowed brow, worn empty eyes and a sinewy neck atop an ample expanse of flesh.

Marlborough Graphics was formed nearly 50 years ago and is a leading publisher and dealer in modern and contemporary prints. As well as publishing work by artists including Francis Bacon, Victor Pasmore, Frank Auerbach, R.B. Kitaj and Paula Rego, Marlborough Graphics deals in prints by Picasso, Matisse, Moore, Nicholson, Hockney and Riley. Marlborough Graphics published a catalogue raisonné of Lucian Freud etchings in 1993 and holds one of the largest collections of Freud etchings for sale in the world.

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EXHIBITION FACTS

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