

## Lucian Freud

In 1938, aged fifteen, Freud enrolled at the Central School of Arts and Crafts—where he engaged principally with drawing—but stayed only for a term, not taking to the school's atmosphere. It was in the early summer of 1939, when sixteen, that he attended the East Anglian School of Drawing and Painting in Dedham, Essex, and found that he could paint. Under the guidance of the school's principal Cedric Morris, Freud produced works including portraits, views from a window, plants and personally significant still lifes. Formative influences cited by Freud include Aubrey Beardsley's Lysistrata illustrations.

After supposedly burning down the East Anglian School as a result of discarding a lit cigarette, in 1941 Freud served on the armed merchant cruiser SS Baltrover—a North Atlantic convoy travelling to Nova Scotia which was attacked from both the air and by a submarine. Initially returning to England to re-attend the East Anglian School now at Benton End, Hadleigh, Suffolk, Freud subsequently moved to Paddington in London and mounted his first one-man show at the gallery Alex Reid & Lefevre in 1944. During his years in Paddington many of his Irish working-class neighbours sat for him, in particular the brothers Charlie and Billy. Freud began to travel to Paris, and spent two months there in 1946, followed by another five months on the Greek island of Poros. He stayed there again in 1947 with Kitty Garman, the daughter of Kathlene Garman and the sculptor Jacob Epstein. Freud married Kitty the following year. During 1948 he also exhibited at the London Gallery.

From 1949-54, Freud made very occasional trips to the Slade School of Art as a visiting tutor having accepted William Coldstream's invitation to join the new staff. During this period of the early 1950s, Freud's focus on drawing and interest in northern European artists including Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres and Albrecht Dürer shifted towards a more concentrated commitment to painting. The work *Interior in Paddington* (1951), a large canvas depicting the photographer Harry Diamond standing next to a giant palm tree, won the Purchase Prize from the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1951.

Having divorced Kitty Garman, Freud was married to Caroline Blackwood in 1953, who like Kitty, he painted a number of times. During 1954, along with Francis Bacon and Ben Nicholson, Freud represented Great Britain at the 27<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. At this time there was critical debate about whether Freud's talent was dwindling; David Sylvester believed that it was 'impossible to say whether this [shift] indicates the incipient decline of an art whose talent flowered remarkably early'. Freud's marriage to Caroline Blackwood ended in 1958 and it was during this period, at the end of the 1950s, that the artists began standing to paint. Moreover, he had actively made the decision to abandon drawing as he felt that this made his painting too linear (a decision made at the end of 1954). His 1958 exhibition at Marlborough Fine Art presented works that used a palette of greens and yellows to create highly specific flesh tones and it is broadly noted that the exhibition was badly received, with Freud ceasing 'to be fashionable'.

Not until 1961 did Freud begin to draw again, utilising watercolour on a trip to Greece with his children, but even then, it remained a minor activity until 1970. It was in 1972 that the artist exhibited at the d'Offay gallery, London (with further exhibitions in 1978 and 1982). The Hayward Gallery, London, retrospective of 1974 played an important role in increasing the artist's exposure, and this was nurtured in particular by William Feaver who later curated the 2002 Tate retrospective. The artist moved to Holland Park in West London during the year of 1977.

In 1982, coinciding with Lawrence Gowing's monograph on Freud, the artist began to make etchings for the first time since *Ill in Paris*, created thirty-four years previously. Freud was awarded the Companion of Honour in 1983 in recognition of his national importance.

Between 1981 and 1983 the artist was highly preoccupied with the completion of the work *Large interior W.11 (after Watteau)*—one of his most ambitious paintings inspired by Antoine Watteau's *Pierrot Content* (c. 1712). In 1986 the National Gallery, London, approached Freud to select works from their permanent collection for an exhibition; the artist chose works by artists including Velázquez, Rembrandt, Rubens, Ingres, Degas and Turner. It was the Turner painting selected by Freud, *Sun rising through vapour: fishermen cleaning and selling fish* (1807), that inspired Freud to create images of fish piled high on the sand.

A retrospective organised by the British Council at the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC, toured to the Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, Paris, the Hayward Gallery, London, and the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, from 1987-8. The artist's mother died in 1989, and Freud drew her on her deathbed concluding a series of portraits of Lucie started by Lucian in 1972. Similarly, Freud depicted many of his children (approximately 15 were recognised) during his lifetime, including Bella Freud, Annie Freud and Esther Freud.

From 1991-3 the exhibition *Lucian Freud: Paintings and Works on Paper 1940-1991* toured from the Palazzo Ruspoli, Rome, to the Tate Gallery, Liverpool, and then onto spaces in Japan and Australia. 1993 also saw the artist accept more honours, being invited into the Order of Merit in recognition of his distinguished service to the arts. From 1993-4 the exhibition *Recent Work* created by the Whitechapel Gallery, London, drew in vast crowds when touring to both the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.

Queen Elizabeth II sat for Freud in 2001, and he produced a small-scale portrait which he then subsequently donated to the Royal Collection. From 2002-3 the exhibition *Lucian Freud*, curated by William Feaver, toured from Tate Britain, London, to the Fundació "la Caixa", Barcelona, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Also, Freud was asked to select the works for the important Constable exhibition *John Constable: le Choix de Lucian Freud* at the Grand Palais, Paris, as he greatly respected the artist's painting.

His 2005 retrospective at the Museo Correr, Venice, coincided with the 51<sup>st</sup> Venice Biennale and was also curated by William Feaver. 2006 saw the exhibition *Auerbach and Freud* open at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, grouping the works of these two British masters, and then in 2007 the exhibition *Lucian Freud* travelled from the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, to the Louisiana in Denmark, and then to the Gemeente Museum, The Hague, Netherlands. From 2007-8, the Museum of Modern art, New York, organised an exhibition which had great impact on the public, titled *The Painter's Etchings*, which explored how integral etching was to Freud's practice, showing the early experiments of the 1940s to the increasingly large and complex compositions of the 1980s.

Having worked for over eight decades as an artist, Lucian Freud died on 20 July 2011.